

"Rex Augustissimus": Reassessing the Reign of King Edmund of England, 939-46

Alaric A. Trousdale

Ph.D.
University of Edinburgh
August 2007



As per regulation 2.5 in the University of Edinburgh's 2006/07 Postgraduate Assessment Regulations for Research Degrees, I declare the following:

- (a) that the thesis has been composed by the candidate, and
- (b) that the work is the candidate's own
- (c) that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Alaric A. Trousdale

Table of Contents

Abstract	vi
Acknowledgements	v
Abbreviations	vii
I. Introduction: King Edmund and the Historians	1
II. Textual Histories: The <i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> and its Recensions	23
III. Edmund <i>Ætheling</i>	52
IV. Regional Politics and the Administration of England, 939-46	87
V. Being Everywhere at Once: Royal and Local Authority in King Edmund's Legislation	164
VI. An Anglo-Saxon Matriarch? Eadgifu, Royal Marriage Policy, and 'English' Unity	197
VII. Conclusion	259
Bibliography	269
Appendix I: King Edmund's Royal Charter Styles	288
Appendix II: Royal Charter Attestations 935x39	292
Appendix III: Royal Charter Attestations 940x41	293
Appendix IV: Royal Charter Attestations 942x43	294
Appendix V: Royal Charter Attestations 944x46	295

Abstract

This thesis is an examination and reassessment of the political situation in England c.939x46. The relationships between royal authority and the aristocracy in the former kingdoms of Mercia, Wessex, East Anglia and the Danelaw is the primary focus, however it also attempts to place such relations into the broader context of insular politics in the mid-tenth-century. Charters, chronicles, hagiography and literary evidence, legislation and numismatics serve as the primary source materials. King Edmund was the first Anglo-Saxon king to succeed to the whole of England; his role and that of his great men, both secular and ecclesiastic, in maintaining the diverse areas under West Saxon control as an integrated kingdom deserves renewed attention. The study establishes that regional concerns and the relationship between the burgeoning royal authority of the king dominated events during King Edmund's reign. The politics of the period are marked by the presence of strong local factions, and the ways that such divisions interacted with each other and the royal will are examined in detail. Furthermore it is argued that King Edmund pursued a balanced policy of regional realignment away from more traditional and established power interests in Wessex towards those based and growing in Mercia and East Anglia, through an emphasis on combined regional and royal centralized authority. This policy was employed through the promotion of powerful aristocratic families largely based outside of Wessex and the expansion of administrative and legislative developments, which encouraged cooperation between royal authority, local influence and the church. It is argued finally that throughout the period such developments should be considered alongside the suggestion that the royal family contributed to the development of a unified England because it was increasingly dependent on regional cohesion.

Acknowledgements

Foremost in a long list of thank-yous must of course be my parents, who have provided so much financial and intellectual support over my years of study. Their patience with and advice on my writing style has helped immensely, and kept me from many an error. Thanks must also be extended to the library staff at Edinburgh University Library, the National Library of Scotland, and the British Library for their help and facilities in procuring texts and manuscripts, often from dusty dark corners of their respective archives. I would also like to thank both the University of Edinburgh and the University of Edinburgh Development Trust for expense and research grants, which permitted both archive study and conference attendance.

Many scholars at Edinburgh University and other institutions have provided generous assistance and contributed towards my scholarship and teaching at various points throughout my postgraduate study. Richard Abels, Leslie Abrams, Michael Angold, Stephen Baxter, Andrew Brown, Alex Burghart, James Campbell, Katie Cubitt, John Davies, Clare Downham, David Dumville, James Fraser, Nicholas Higham, Alan Hood, Charles Insley, Shashi Jayakumar, Simon Keynes, Jinty Nelson, Gale Owen-Crocker, David Pelteret, Don Scragg, Pauline Stafford and Barbara Yorke all deserve special mention. Nicholas Brooks provided much special assistance in dealing with Anglo-Saxon charters, and graciously shared work in progress; John Hudson and Alex Woolf provided valuable comment on early drafts of certain chapters, and Judith Green's many important suggestions on an early draft of the completed thesis kept me from many pitfalls and perilous purple passages. Kristen Brauer provided assistance at every stage, both as a thoroughly meticulous copy-editor and a source of inspiration. It perhaps goes without saying that I also owe a considerable debt to the many scholars whose work is both challenged, and hopefully

augmented in this thesis. Comments on giants and their shoulders may be commonplace, but no less pertinent when acknowledging so great an obligation.

My supervisors remain the most important people on which to bestow special gratitude. Throughout my studies Andrew Brown and Judith Green have provided a great deal of comment and encouragement, not only in scholarly matters but issues of teaching as well. Their guidance and criticism has helped the development of my teaching abilities, and reinforced many of the motivations for my engagement in postgraduate study. Finally, but certainly not lastly, Tom Brown has my everlasting gratitude for his initial faith in and encouragement of a highly inexperienced, young but avid would-be academic. His constant direction, care, diligence and patience have been instrumental of my development into a scholar and historian of whom I hope he can be proud.

Abbreviations

ASC	<i>Anglo-Saxon Chronicle</i> [cited by year and, where applicable, recension].
Asser's Life of King Alfred	Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (eds.), <i>Alfred The Great, Asser's <u>Life of King Alfred</u> and other contemporary sources</i> (Harmondsworth, 1983).
Chronicle of Æthelweard, The	A. Campbell (ed.), <i>The Chronicle of Æthelweard</i> (London, 1962).
Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents III	<i>Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland III</i> , A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds.), (Oxford, 1871).
Councils and Synods	<i>Councils and Synods, With Other Documents Relating to The English Church I, A.D. 871-1204</i> , D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. N. L. Brooke (eds.), (2 Vols., Oxford, 1981).
EHD	D. Whitelock (ed), <i>English Historical Documents, Vol. I: c.500-1042</i> , 2 nd Edition (London, 1979).
ECEE	C.R. Hart (ed), <i>The Early Charters of Eastern England</i> (Leicester, 1966).
ECNENM	C.R. Hart (ed), <i>The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands</i> (Leicester, 1975).
ECW	H.P.R. Finberg (ed), <i>The Early Charters of Wessex</i> (Leicester, 1964).
Flodoard of Reims	Steven Fanning and Bernard S. Bachrach (eds. and trans.), <i>The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966</i> (Toronto, 2004).
Gesta Pontificum Anglorum	David Preest (ed. and trans.), William of Malmesbury, <i>The deeds of the Bishops of England (Gesta pontificum anglorum)</i> (Woodbridge, 2002).
Gesta Regum Anglorum	R.A.B. Mynors (ed. and trans.), William of Malmesbury, <i>Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings</i> (2 Vols., Oxford, 1998).
Historia Regum Anglorum	J. Stevenson (ed.), Symeon of Durham, "Historia Regum Anglorum", <i>The Church Historians of England III</i> (London, 1858).

- John of Worcester R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, (eds.), *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk, Trans. (3 Vols., Oxford, 1995).
- Liber Eliensis E.O. Blake (ed.), *Liber Eliensis*, Camden Third Series, Vol. XCII (London, 1962).
- Roger of Wendover J.A. Giles (ed.), *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History* (London, 1849).
- S P.H. Sawyer (ed), *Anglo-Saxon charters: an annotated list and bibliography* (London, 1968) [cited by number].
- SEHD F.E. Harmer (ed.), *Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1914).
- Symeonis monachi opera Thomas Arnold (ed.), *Symeonis monachi opera omnia in Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores; or, Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland During the Middle Ages* (London, 1858-1911).
- Vita Sancti Dunstani *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, in Andrew J. Turner and Bernard J. Muir (ed. and trans.), *Eadmer of Canterbury, Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald* (Oxford, 2006).
- Vita Sancti Odonis *Vita Sancti Odonis*, in Andrew J. Turner and Bernard J. Muir (ed. and trans.), *Eadmer of Canterbury, Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald* (Oxford, 2006).
- Vita Sancti Oswaldi *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, in Andrew J. Turner and Bernard J. Muir (ed. and trans.), *Eadmer of Canterbury, Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald* (Oxford, 2006).

Chapter I

Introduction

King Edmund and the Historians

The period between the reigns of King Athelstan and King Edgar remains one of the most obscure periods in tenth-century Anglo-Saxon studies. Not only is it marked by extreme difficulties in contemporary evidence; it has also often been ignored or given brief treatment by historians for a very long time. It is common in the great majority of surveys of England in the tenth-century to find that much greater attention has been paid to two particular periods in the tenth century, specifically the reigns of Kings Athelstan (924-39) and Edgar (957-75). It is generally thought that most of the significant advances in administration occurred under these two kings' direction. Æthelred II (978-1016) is seen as a late anomaly, a failure on account of the military breakdown in the face of organized Viking attacks late in his reign, although his reign has seen great revision in recent years. King Edward the Elder (900-24) is not often discussed, as there is little to tell; his reign is perhaps the least understood and in some ways the most poorly documented.¹

The reigns of Kings Edmund (939-46), Eadred (946-55), and Eadwig (955-9) are often lumped together as a sort of interim period between the much more interesting reigns of Athelstan and Edgar. It is for this reason, that is, the seeming lack of evidence for administrative development, that the period between these two kings is so often left by the metaphorical wayside in more extensive discussions of Anglo-Saxon administrative history. Most discussions of King Edmund, for example, begin and end with his military campaigns in the Five Boroughs and in Scotland. Despite some attention to the period in recent decades, there exists little detailed and

¹ The recent publication of a collection of essays, found in *Edward the Elder, 899-924*, N.J. Higham and D.H. Hill (eds.), (London, 2001) is a notable exception.

condensed scholarly examination of many aspects of King Edmund's reign; a reassessment of this most obscure period is the subject of the present thesis.²

Initially several historiographical matters will be addressed, the first being an analysis of twentieth-century historians' tendency to discount the reign of King Edmund in favour of more "interesting" times. An attempt to examine closely how modern historians have treated his reign will be made, and suggestions will be put forward that might possibly explain some of the reasons for this inattention. This will be done not only in order to introduce particular comments made by those historians upon whose shoulders the present writer meekly crouches, but also to help place the arguments to come into their proper context. Then more recent scholarship will be addressed, and it will be shown how the present thesis will fit alongside and buttress more recent historiographical trends. A coherent case for the necessity of a re-examination and revision of this overlooked and often misunderstood period will be established.

The trend outlined above is observable throughout much of the corpus of Anglo-Saxon scholarship. It can be detected as early as 1910, in the work of Charles Oman. He covered Edmund's reign with great brevity, emphasizing his military endeavours almost exclusively.³ Oman does note the comparative lack of evidence

² The royal style reflected in the title of the present thesis, *rex augustissimus*, is found in a letter written by Archbishop Oda of Canterbury (941-58) to his suffragan bishops c.942x6, and preserved in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*. In this letter Archbishop Oda calls on his fellow bishops to feed their flocks with the sustenance of sound doctrine, and makes especially clear that as bishops, their opinions matter and what they say has an impact on the spiritual well being of the kingdom. This royal style is unique in Anglo-Saxon England. It appears in no royal diploma, no narrative source, and, from what can be told, no other English king had been identified as such before Edmund. The uniqueness of this title was discovered too late in the present author's research for it to be given the detailed treatment it deserves, but the fact that such a significant detection came at the end of nearly four years of intense study of the period shows how much work there remains to be done on the reign of King Edmund.

³ Charles Oman, *England Before the Norman Conquest: Being a History of the Celtic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Periods down to the Year A.D. 1066* (London, 1910).

for Edmund's reign, as opposed to King Athelstan's, but this does not prevent him from quickly moving his focus on to the events of Eadred's more documented reign.

In his groundbreaking survey of Anglo-Saxon England, Sir Frank Stenton titled his tenth chapter "The Conquest of Scandinavian England,"⁴ and it was in this context that he approached a narrative discussion of the first half of the tenth century. Stenton preferred to lavish attention as well as praise on Edmund's elder half-brother, Athelstan. He dedicated some eighteen pages solely to the deeds of Athelstan, the military subjugation of his enemies, and his munificence towards his people in every conceivable way. The section dealing with Athelstan is dotted with passages that border on panegyric; on his compassion in lawgiving, Stenton said "It is [a] suggestion of a humane mind in revolt against the grimmer aspects of government which raises Athelstan's laws above the commonplace,"⁵ and in reference to the Battle of Brunanburh, "...Athelstan was defending a state which embraced the descendants of Alfred's Danish enemies, and a civilization which united them to Christian Europe"⁶; and finally, "In character and cast of mind he is the one West Saxon king who will bear comparison with Alfred."⁷ In contrast, Edmund garners a scant five pages, and Eadred a negligible three.

Stenton's only concern with Edmund's role in the grand scheme of Anglo-Saxon history seems to have been Edmund's military role in dealing with the north. There is no discussion of administrative development in the years 939-55, and Stenton dismisses the cession of the Five Boroughs in 940 as "an ignominious surrender."⁸ The picture is not exactly one of high praise. It is worth noting that Stenton includes the reigns of Edmund and Eadred in his chapter on the conquest of the north, and he

⁴ Sir Frank Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd Ed., (Oxford, 1971).

⁵ *Ibid*, 354.

⁶ *Ibid*, 343.

⁷ *Ibid*, 356.

⁸ *Ibid*, 357.

waits until Kings Eadwig and Edgar appear to discuss “The Decline of the Old English Monarchy”; but the implication is clear. Edmund and Eadred are to be regarded as not up to par with the great Athelstan, but two kings who almost let all his hard work slip away.

Broad surveys of the Anglo-Saxon period are not the only scholarly works to follow this pattern. In studies more specific in scope this practice is seen as well. Eric John’s *Orbis Britanniae and other studies* (Leicester, 1966) is a prime example. In his chapter on the relationship between how kings portrayed themselves as imperial rulers, and the corresponding developments in the Latinity and subscriptions present in their charters, King Edmund’s probable influences and contributions are compressed into half a paragraph in-between John’s discussion of Athelstan and Eadred.⁹

In Alfred Smyth’s study of the Viking kingdoms of York and Dublin in the first half of the tenth-century (in itself, often overlooked) Edmund is given due consideration, but far more attention is given to Athelstan’s role in the political events, not to mention the monarchs’ respective military roles. When describing the part played by Archbishop Odo in the negotiations with Anlaf Gothfrithsson in 940, Smyth states, “It is true that Archbishop Odo had opposed Anlaf at Brunanburh only two years before, but he was then supporting the mighty Athelstan...”¹⁰ In general Smyth tends to lavish far more respect and admiration on the deeds of Athelstan than Edmund or Eadred, although it should be noted that he does not follow the pattern of grouping Edmund and Eadred together as two like-minded, relatively un-influential kings.

⁹ John, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies*, 54-5.

¹⁰ Alfred Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin: The History and Archaeology of Two Related Viking Kingdoms* (2 Vols., Dublin, 1979), II, 94.

Works that deal more with the particulars of Anglo-Saxon government, and the development of institutions are not entirely immune to this mode of assessment, either. The work of H.R. Loyn, a renowned scholar as well as an excellent writer of more general interest books on Anglo-Saxon, and especially Viking age history, is a good example. His *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500-1087* (London, 1984) has become a mainstay in countless medieval undergraduate courses. Instead of favouring the deeds of Athelstan, as Smyth or Stenton tended to do, the majority of his attention is focused on, and indeed much of his reverence is reserved for, King Edgar. Even Athelstan, about whom one would expect to hear much, is given meagre attention compared to King Edgar. Accordingly, the reign of Æthelred II is regarded as a dismal period, a reversal of the leaps and bounds made in the unification of England under Edgar. Loyn sums up nearly 120 years of Anglo-Saxon government and kingship by stating:

“The successors of Alfred, English or Danish, gradually brought the whole of England under their control and political unity coincided with a development of royal authority. Government became overtly territorial, a kingdom of England rather than a kingdom of the English, or of tribal units among the English. A high point in development of the monarchy was reached under Edgar (959-975). His spectacular coronation at Bath in 973 and subsequent ceremonies on the Dee near Chester symbolized the range and vigour of the Christian monarchy. The ineptitude and distrust of Ethelred’s reign was to some extent made good under the Danish Cnut (1016-35).”¹¹

While a few of the virtues and accomplishments of monarchs between Alfred and Edgar are noted, they are done so almost entirely in passing; indeed, much is taken for granted.

Perhaps the most dismissive example of the habit of overlooking the mid-tenth-century comes from the pages of a more general, popular history text, but it is telling of the situation nonetheless. Its author states that “Athelstan was succeeded by

¹¹ Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England*, 81-2.

his brother Edmund, and he by his brother Eadred; both were conscientious monarchs about whom comparatively little is known; neither lived long.”¹² While perhaps accurate in a lethargic sort of way, it is a decidedly unconcerned position. King Eadwig is only mentioned in the context of his famous disagreement with Dunstan, and the period between Athelstan and Edgar is compressed into a single, short paragraph.

This attitude is also evidenced in the formal organization of Simon Keynes’ online bibliography, a resource generally regarded as one of the finest of its kind for Anglo-Saxon studies.¹³ In its subheadings on England in the tenth-century, each individual king is given his own hyperlink to the sub-section wherein are listed sources dealing with his particular reign; all that is, except Edmund, Eadred and Eadwig, who are grouped together into one section. Even King Edward the Martyr, who only reigned for some three years, is given more precedence in the bibliographical hierarchy, with his own hyperlink. This not only reflects the trend among historians to lump these three kings together as a group, but also shows the need for a thorough re-examination of the period and the distinct episodes that lie within it.

That said, Simon Keynes’ chapter in *The New Cambridge Medieval History* (Cambridge, 1999) is a notable advancement in tenth-century studies. While King Edmund does not receive a great deal of attention, the attention that he does obtain is innovative, circumspect, entirely relevant and completely up to date with recent scholarship. Keynes does Edmund great service in the short section dedicated to his reign, and his discussion makes use of nearly every relevant source available. His picture of the period is one of careful speculation; he sees King Edmund’s reign as

¹² Christopher Brooke, *The Saxon and Norman Kings* (London, 1963), 140.

¹³ This excellent resource can be found at: <http://www.wmich.edu/medieval/rawl/keynes1/home.htm>.

one where a great deal of statecraft was going on, yet the particulars are impossibly clouded by the relative lack of direct evidence. When referring to the period Keynes states,

“It is unfortunate, however, that it is so difficult on the basis of the available evidence to get much impression of the currents which lie beneath the surface of recorded events. The unfolding pattern of attestations in the charters of the 930s and 940s shows who among the bishops, ealdormen and thegns may have been the more significant figures in the domestic affairs of the day, and we can guess that they played their respective roles in a complex story; but since it is impossible to identify the competing interests and to separate the different factions, the plot itself lies beyond our reach.”¹⁴

While the former assertion is quite amenable, the latter claim of impossibility is precisely what the present thesis will attempt to challenge.

The examples cited above are by far the most common sentiments and opinions expressed regarding Edmund’s role in Anglo-Saxon history and government. They have been listed not to criticize their respective emphases, but to make the point that Anglo-Saxon scholarship, until recently, has often overlooked the period the present thesis seeks to examine so closely. This is not to say that they are the only sort however, and there are certain historians writing on more specific topics who have paid more critical attention to the period than others. The great majority of scholars who have dedicated time and attention to King Edmund and the politics of the mid-tenth-century in general have been within the last few decades. This is due in part to trends and fashions in Anglo-Saxon studies, but also a fundamental shift in emphasis on source materials.

With these examples in mind, it is not surprising that the majority of discussions dealing more specifically with King Edmund and his times appear in

¹⁴ Simon Keynes, “England, c.900-1016”, *The New Cambridge Medieval History III*, Tim Reuter (ed.), (Cambridge, 1999), 456-86, at 473.

books and articles that address varied and specialised topics, such as the church, the aristocracy, landholding and patronage. Approaching the reign of King Edmund is not as difficult as one may at first surmise, and despite the lack of a comprehensive study of his reign, much has been written that deals with the period from an oblique angle. Thus there is a considerable corpus of recent scholarly work that deals with King Edmund, though much of it is dispersed amongst various books, monographs and articles on diverse subjects. One of the aims of the present thesis is to use this diverse scholarship in a more direct examination of the period of King Edmund's reign. In an encyclopaedic approach such consolidation has already taken place, as the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography's entry for King Edmund takes into account much recent work on the period, and examines in some detail such topics as his legislation and the development of reforms within the church.¹⁵ While large parts of the entry focus on Edmund's struggles against the Scandinavian kings of York, its balance and scope is a notable achievement, as it gives brief yet weighty attention to many aspects of the period including government, legislation, ecclesiastical reform and Edmund's relations with the aristocracy.

Certain scholars are deserving of particular mention with regard to modern trends in interpreting King Edmund's reign and the tenth century in general. Pauline Stafford has helped to spearhead the growing propensity towards closer examination of the period. In her influential work covering the politics of the tenth and eleventh centuries, she not only discusses in great detail the multitude of problems associated with interpreting the period in question, but also attempts to provide some solutions.¹⁶ Taking examples from both England and the continent, Stafford brings such issues to bear in her more wide-ranging works as well. Her method introduced several new

¹⁵ <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8501>.

¹⁶ Pauline Stafford, *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries* (London, 1989).

matters and ideas with which to approach the mid-tenth-century, including a discussion of the role played by the Queen dowager Eadgifu, third wife of Edward the Elder and mother to Kings Edmund and Eadred.¹⁷ In *Unification and Conquest*, as well as many of her other works, she investigates the varying degrees of influence Eadgifu may have had on her sons, and on the way in which they ruled.¹⁸ Stafford's work is of the utmost importance to this study, which hopes to supplement and expand upon her research. Stafford also makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of the intricacies behind the diplomatic of royal patronage, and introduces some salient points regarding its practice during the period between the reigns of Edward the Elder and Æthelred II. H.R. Loyn broached this subject in *Governance*, but the concepts and questions introduced were significantly broadened and increased in Stafford's *Unification and Conquest*.

Few non-professional historians have had as significant an impact on Anglo-Saxon studies as Cyril Hart, and his research has shone light into some of the darkest corners. When dealing with issues of governmental and administrative features of the Anglo-Saxon "state", the present study has drawn extensively on his findings, especially in the context of King Edward the Elder's conquest of the Danelaw.¹⁹ Hart's work on the English aristocracy is of the utmost importance as well, and his examination of the family of Ealdorman Athelstan 'Half-King' of East Anglia provided much of the inspiration for this author's original interest in the period. In a similar vein Ann Williams' many articles and books on Anglo-Saxon England government and the great families of the realm have provided considerable insight

¹⁷ Ibid, 43-4.

¹⁸ See also *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages* (Athens, 1983), and "Queens, Nunneries, and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh- Century England", *Past and Present* 163 (1999), 3-35.

¹⁹ See especially *The Danelaw* (London, 1992). Hart's work on royal diplomas still carries weight as well; see *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (Leicester, 1966) (hereafter *ECEE*), and also *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands* (Leicester, 1975) (Hereafter *ECNEM*).

into the issues surrounding the prosopography of the late Anglo-Saxon period.²⁰ Her seminal study of the family of Ealdorman Ælfhere of Mercia stands alongside Hart's work on Ealdorman Æthelstan of East Anglia, and their methodology has influenced many scholars.

The ecclesiastical and religious milieu current during King Edmund's reign has received a good deal of scholarly attention, as it was he who originally promoted Dunstan to the abbacy of Glastonbury. The subject of the cultural and educational standards of the day have been examined in great detail by David Dumville in what is one of the few essay-length treatments of significant aspects of King Edmund's reign. While Dumville overwhelmingly sees Edmund as an extension of King Athelstan, continuing his brother's policies and following his plans, he remarks that the period 939x46 was "a vibrant one", and that had Edmund survived for longer "...he might yet have been remembered as one of the more remarkable of Anglo-Saxon kings."²¹ Such sentiment is markedly different from many previous assessments of the period.

²⁰ See especially "Principes merciorum gentis: the family, career, and connections of Ælfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, 956-83", *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982), 143-72; "Some Notes and Considerations on Problems Connected with the English Succession, 860-1066", *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies* I (Ipswich, 1978), 144-167; "A West-Country Magnate of the Eleventh Century: the Family, Estates and Patronage of Beorhtric Son of Ælfgar", *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: The Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century*, K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (ed.), (Woodbridge, 1997), 41-68; and *Kingship and government in pre-conquest England c.500-c.1066* (New York, 1999).

²¹ David Dumville, *Wessex and England From Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural, and Ecclesiastical Revival* (Woodbridge, 1992), 184.

The work of Simon Keynes²², Susan Kelly²³, Nicholas Brooks²⁴ and David Dumville²⁵ has also greatly emboldened the exploration of Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas, and much inspiration has been taken especially from Keynes' approach to the interpretation of charter witness lists. While King Edmund's diplomas as a corpus remain relatively understudied, the methods of charter criticism pioneered by these and other diplomatists have paved the way for further study. No discussion of Anglo-Saxon law, or history for that matter, can ignore the work of the late Patrick Wormald, and his extensive scholarship has been a constant companion in the present study.²⁶ At the risk of stating the obvious, and to temper comments made above, debt to Frank Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England* should be acknowledged, that work of such unparalleled learning, which has proven so invaluable a resource over the course of the dissertation.

None of the historians listed above could have written a word if it were not for the contemporary documents themselves, and a few brief comments on primary sources are necessary. There remain considerable problems with many of the sources

²² See *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready': A Study of Their Use As Historical Evidence* (Cambridge, 1980); "King Athelstan's Books", *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies presented to Peter Clemoes on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*, Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (eds.), (Cambridge, 1985), 143-201; "The 'Dunstan B' charters", *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994), 165-193; and also "King Alfred and the Mercians", *Kings, Currency, and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*, Mark A.S. Blackburn and David N. Dumville (eds.), (Woodbridge, 1998), 1-46.

²³ Kelly's editions of many of the cartularies containing Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas set a new standard for their criticism. See *Charters of St Augustine's Abbey Canterbury and Minster-in-Thanel*, Anglo-Saxon Charters IV (Oxford, 1995); *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters V (Oxford, 1996); *Charters of Selsey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters VI (Oxford, 1998); *Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters VII-VIII (2 Vols., Oxford, 2000); *Charters of St Paul's, London*, Anglo-Saxon Charters X (Oxford, 2004); and most recently *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, Anglo-Saxon Charters XI (Oxford, 2006).

²⁴ See especially *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury* (Leicester, 1984); "The Career of St. Dunstan", *St. Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*, Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Tim Tatton-Brown (eds.), (Woodbridge, 1992), 1-23, and *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury* (Forthcoming).

²⁵ See "The Ætheling: a Study in Anglo-Saxon Constitutional History", *Anglo Saxon England* 8 (1979), 1-33; "Brittany and <<Armes Prydein Vawr>>", *Etudes Celtiques* 20 (1983), 145-159; and most importantly *Wessex and England From Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural, and Ecclesiastical Revival*.

²⁶ See especially his *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the twelfth century* Vol. I (Oxford, 1999), and also his collection of previously published essays, *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience* (London, 1999).

at the historian's disposal. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* record for the period 937x55 is notoriously confused as to chronology, and there are other narrative sources which contradict it and each other at times. Despite its uncertainties, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* remains the best source for the major political events of the period. The extant versions of the *ASC* will prove invaluable throughout the thesis, and the second chapter will be dedicated to a close examination of their specific individual contents.

There are a number of other contemporary narrative sources for the mid-tenth-century that have a secondary value. These include Simeon of Durham's *Historia Regum Anglorum*²⁷, the *Annals of Flodoard of Reims*²⁸, and the *Annales Cambriae*²⁹. It has proven better for the present purpose to treat these sources not as a group requiring reconciliation with the *ASC*, but as specific records deserving special consideration in their own context. For these reasons the various problems in interpreting such sources shall be addressed as necessary in the perspective of the argument to be presented in later chapters. Thus, Simeon of Durham's *Historia Regum Anglorum* will be discussed when addressing King Edmund's dealings with Northumbria, and the *Annals of Flodoard of Reims* when discussing Edmund's foreign policies.

A wealth of documentation for the period also comes from the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In a few instances the Anglo-Norman historians, who were some of the first to examine critically (and not so critically) many of the sources listed above, will also be relied upon, primarily William of Malmesbury³⁰ and John of Worcester³¹.

²⁷ J. Stevenson (ed.), *The Church Historians of England* Vol. III (London, 1858).

²⁸ *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966*, Steven Fanning, and Bernard S. Bachrach (eds. and trans.), (Toronto, 2004).

²⁹ *Annales Cambriae*, John Williams Ab Ithel (ed.), (London, 1860).

³⁰ See William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings*, Mynors, R.A.B., Ed. and Trans. (2 Vols., Oxford, 1998); and also *The deeds of the Bishops of England (Gesta Pontificum Anglorum)*, David Preest (ed and trans.), (Woodbridge, 2002).

³¹ R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk (eds.), *The chronicle of John of Worcester*, translated by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk (2 Vols., Oxford, 1995).

They drew on sources extant as well as sources no longer available to modern historians, and in certain cases their accounts are all that is available to the historian presented with lacunae in the document record. Anglo-Norman historians also appear to incorporate elements of oral tradition in their histories, and these elements, where observed, can prove helpful when the historian is pressed for further information. Also extremely valuable and dating from the eleventh to the twelfth centuries is the *Liber Eliensis*, a unique post-Conquest history of the monastery at Ely.³² The *Liber Eliensis* drew on contemporary as well as ancient sources, most now lost in their original form, and provides historians with a unique perspective of the tenth-century as many of its sources were in the vernacular. This text will prove exceptionally valuable in the discussion of King Edmund's wife and widow in chapter six.

There is also some valuable information to be had for King Edmund's reign in the pages of the late-tenth century *vitae* of SS Dunstan³³, Æthelwold³⁴, and Oswald³⁵. These three men were the brains and brawn behind the so-called Benedictine reform that took place in England from the 950s to the 980s, and their careers all initiated during Edmund's reign. Dunstan was appointed Abbot of Glastonbury c.941; Æthelwold was taught at the court of King Athelstan and joined Dunstan upon his translation; and Oswald was the nephew of Archbishop Oda of Canterbury. The information for the period found in these *vitae* is coloured of course by the lens of hagiographical tradition, each individual saints' own biases, and the biases of those

³² For the original Latin edition see E.O. Blake (ed.), *Liber Eliensis*, Camden Third Series, Volume XCII (London, 1962) (Hereafter *Liber Eliensis*). A recent and excellent English translation has made this text more approachable to the scholar; see Janet Fairweather (trans.), *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely From the Seventh Century to the Twelfth* (Woodbridge, 2005).

³³ William Stubbs (ed.), *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, (London, 1874); Andrew J Turner and Bernard J. Muir (eds. and trans.) *Eadmer of Canterbury, Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald* (Oxford, 2006).

³⁴ Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom (eds.), Wulfstan of Winchester, *The Life of St Æthelwold* (Oxford, 1991).

³⁵ *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, in J. Raine (ed.), *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops I* (London, 1879); and also Turner and Muir (eds. and trans.) *Eadmer of Canterbury, Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*.

recording their lives. These are difficult problems to overcome, and the information present within these sources must be used with a very critical eye.

Apart from narrative historical sources and relevant material found in saints' lives, by far the largest corpus of material for the reign of King Edmund is the some fifty-seven charters issued or purportedly issued in his name.³⁶ The historian is at a rather unusual advantage when approaching these documents, as when the number of documents issued by King Edmund is figured against the number of years during which he reigned, one finds that the period 939-46 is actually among the best-documented periods in Anglo-Saxon history. Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas are very particular historical documents, and require a specialized vocabulary and editorial conventions, as well a great deal of close attention. None are self-authenticating, no two are the same, and no two can be approached in the same manner. They also vary greatly in their specific value for any given purpose, as some contain special features that others do not. Examples include charters that contain exceptionally long witness lists, detailed boundary clauses, and peculiar or rare language.

A full exploration of all the notable aspects of Edmund's royal diplomas, such as diplomatic and palaeography would require a project beyond the scope of the present endeavour.³⁷ A large section of chapter three and the majority of chapter four will rely on a close examination of the witness lists of King Athelstan's and King Edmund's charters. When approaching the charters as evidence, great care must be taken in considering all significant mitigating factors, such as authenticity, provenance, and cartulary transmission. The methodology employed follows from several assumptions, but none of these assumptions are followed unquestioningly.

³⁶ See P. H. Sawyer (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon charters: an annotated list and bibliography* (London, 1968).

³⁷ For a recently published examination of the latter subject, see Susan B. Thompson, *Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas: A Paleography* (Woodbridge, 2006). Unfortunately this work was published too late for its findings to contribute significantly to the present thesis, but its conclusions have been taken into consideration.

Simon Keynes and others have shown that the names of charter witnesses can be reliably attributed to either their actual or perceived attendance at royal meetings, and that the order in which they attest reflects their status or seniority at court.³⁸ That said, there remains some disagreement as to how far this evidence can be taken; while names on witness lists undoubtedly reflect something, it is less clear what it is that they actually signify at different times.³⁹

While re-opening the Anglo-Saxon chancery debate is not a goal of the thesis, it does bear on the discussion.⁴⁰ Many historians have recognized that charters from King Athelstan through the reign of King Eadred exhibit signs of having been produced by a single group or agency.⁴¹ Numerous conclusions have been reached bearing on whether royal diplomas were produced by individual ecclesiastical scriptoria, or by some kind of centralized royal writing office. But as Charles Insley has suggested, such seemingly conflicted views are not entirely irreconcilable.⁴² Or, if one follows Susan Thompson's recent work, Anglo-Saxon royal diplomas were produced by monastic scriptoria before the tenth century, and by a centralized document office after. Thompson observes that the styles present in extant originals show features in the script suggesting that upon both King Athelstan's and King Edmund's accessions there was a change in diploma production, and that this was

³⁸ See Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 130-4 and 154-62.

³⁹ M.K. Lawson, *Cnut, The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century* (London, 1993), 66-7.

⁴⁰ For the background on this debate see especially R. Drögereit, "Gab es eine angelsächsische Königskanzlei?", *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 13 (1935) 335-436; and also P. Chaplais, "The Authenticity of the Royal Anglo-Saxon Diplomas of Exeter", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 39 (1966), 1-34; and "The Royal Anglo-Saxon 'Chancery' of the Tenth Century Revisited", H. Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (eds.), *Studies in Medieval History presented to R.H.C. Davis*, (London, 1985), 41-51; D. Dumville, *English Caroline Script and Monastic History* (Woodbridge, 1993); "English Square Minuscule Script: The Mid-Century Phases", *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1993), 113-64; and Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 1-53; and "The West-Saxon Charters of King Æthelwulf and His Sons", *English Historical Review* 109 (1994), 1109-49; as well as "The 'Dunstan B' charters", 165-93. For excellent recent summaries of the debate, see Charles Insley, "Charters and Scriptoria in the Anglo-Saxon South-West", *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998), 173-97, at 179-84; and also his "Assemblies and Charters in Late Anglo-Saxon England", in P.S. Barnwell and Marco Mostert (eds.), *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages* (Turnhout, Belgium, 2003) 47-59.

⁴¹ See Thompson, *Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas: A Paleography*, 8-18.

⁴² Insley, "Charters and Scriptoria in the Anglo-Saxon South-West", 183.

most likely centralized.⁴³ Although published too recently to contribute significantly to the present thesis, Thompson's conclusions may further the suggestion that names on diploma witness lists in the mid-tenth-century likely reflect some centralized notion of who was important in relation to the king, as opposed to the perspective held by dispersed monastic scriptoria. Much more work on Anglo-Saxon diplomatic traditions is needed, and while for the most part the chancery debate will stay on the periphery, the present investigation will seek to supplement and expand upon the existing scholarship.

While the movement of names in the witness lists can at times possibly be attributed to changes in or varieties of production, often patterns emerge that show when individuals appear, disappear, and when their status may change compared to their fellows. Whether or not the recorded names are from an actual meeting of the king's *witan*, or from the recorded notes of a royal meeting, the appearance and disappearance of individuals can be used as evidence to demonstrate who were close enough to the king to warrant their inclusion. The witness lists are not without their limitations, and the approach taken is not infallible; for instance there is often uncertainty over whether seniority or status is the overriding factor in the order in which ealdormen and (especially) thegns appear in charters. Witness lists were often copied from other charters, and local factors must also be taken into consideration, not to mention the predilections of the scribe.⁴⁴ There is virtually no way to tell for certain the reasons why an individuals' appearance in or absence from the charter record can be observed, and speculation is often involved. That said, when certain patterns emerge after careful analysis, one can perhaps stand on firmer ground.

Despite many difficulties, it is felt that such methodology is not as risky as it may at

⁴³ Thompson, *Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas: A Paleography*, 147.

⁴⁴ See Insley, "Charters and Scriptoria in the Anglo-Saxon South-West", 173-97; and Lawson, *Cnut, The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century*, 65-71.

first seem, and it is hoped that the body of the argument will show the value of such an approach.

Charter criticism is a subjective business, and there are many disputed documents. In cases where certain charters are unanimously rejected as spurious, forgeries, or untrustworthy for other reasons, they have been omitted from the analysis and noted. Where argument exists on a particular document or documents, attempts have been made to reconcile the findings of others with the present authors' comparative scrutiny; but this rarely presents serious problems, and the great majority of questionable charters are treated with considerable caution. No charter is totally beyond question, and each document is approached in its own proper context.

A large part of the discussion will turn to the evidence found in King Edmund's law codes.⁴⁵ Their contents and context are of the utmost importance to an understanding, not only of King Edmund's reign proper, but also of legislation and administration in the mid-tenth-century in general. The laws have their own problems of interpretation as well, as the manner by which they have been transmitted down to us has been shaped by contemporary designs and, arguably, the personal legal predilections of Archbishop Wulfstan of York (1002-23). The laws offer a wealth of information for the administration of the kingdom during the 930s and 40s, and it will be shown how they fit alongside both the ideological aspirations espoused by King Edmund and his contemporaries, as well as what may have been the realities surrounding their promulgation and implementation.

⁴⁵ These have been edited and translated in full. Liebermann's magisterial survey of Anglo-Saxon law, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen* (3 Vols., Halle, 1903-16) remains the starting point. For the original text alongside English translation see F.L. Attenborough (ed. and trans.), *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings* (Cambridge, 1922) (Hereafter *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*), and A.J. Robertson (ed.), *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I* (Cambridge, 1925) (Hereafter *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*).

One final source that will garner some limited attention is King Edmund's coinage. The coins are diverse and dispersed, and their analysis is even more specialized than the study of charters. The coins minted in the mid-tenth-century represent a massive corpus of evidence, and it is beyond the scope of the current project to examine them completely; therefore the present investigation will rely to a great extent on the existing scholarship.⁴⁶ While broad surveys exist for King Athelstan's and King Edgar's coins, comparatively little has been written specifically on King Edmund's coins. They have relevance not only in analysing the projection of royal image, but also at times regional differences can be observed, and it is this latter aspect that will occupy the most direct attention.

Much of the work to be presented in this study is original research, but it also represents an effort to draw on and expand upon much of the dispersed secondary material. As noted above, much has been written on King Edmund's reign, but there remains work to be done in condensing and collating such diffuse secondary erudition. Inevitably, some previous research will be challenged. For the most part however, much of the existing scholarship dealing with King Edmund and his contemporaries comprises the essential starting point for any subsequent investigations of his reign, and a certain deference is required.

The thesis presented consequently resembles more a collection of essays on specific subjects, such as law, politics and family relations, yet the central aims of the thesis will help to bind them together into a more coherent whole. The second chapter is a consideration of some of the original narrative sources for the events of King Edmund's reign, comprising reflections on who was recording his deeds and how this

⁴⁶ See especially C.E. Blunt, "The Crowned Bust Coinage of Edmund 939-946", *British Numismatic Journal* 40 (1971), 17-21; and also his "The Coinage of Athelstan, King of England 924-939", *British Numismatic Journal* 42 (1974), 35-158. For a broad survey of tenth-century coinage see C.E. Blunt, B. H.I.H. Stewart and C. S.S. Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England From Edward the Elder to Edgar's Reform* (Oxford, 1989).

information has been received over the centuries. It examines primarily the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, and explores some of the possible reasons behind the period being so poorly documented in the first place; it will argue that the period of King Edmund's reign was remembered and recorded differently in particular regional contexts. The third chapter delves speculatively into Edmund's youth and development at the court of his brother Athelstan, and how the contemporary cultural and political milieu may have shaped and conditioned his personality and gubernatorial style. The third chapter is partly an exploratory exercise, but it will also assist in setting the stage for the discussion of the events of King Edmund's reign by introducing the political situation that existed when Edmund became king, and help to place the arguments of subsequent chapters into a more complete and proper context.

The fourth chapter is an in-depth analysis of the political situation that developed during King Edmund's reign. It will address combined elements of narrative history, domestic and foreign policy, the development of royal government and relations with the aristocracy. This chapter involves a great deal of close source analysis, and much of the argument relies on the close reading of Edmund's diplomas. Anglo-Saxon charter criticism has seen great advances in recent decades, and it is hoped that by putting some flesh on the diplomatic bones some of that learning will be put to good use. The chapter will argue several things. First it will address the chronology of known events, a chronology that has long been disputed. Secondly it will show that throughout the course of his reign, but especially after the so-called "redemption" of the Five Boroughs in 942, King Edmund's attentions and priorities underwent a significant shift, and Mercian and Eastern interests appear to gain power and influence over the West Saxon ones that had dominated King Athelstan's court.

This will be shown through an examination of who was apparently gaining and losing royal favour, alongside the context of England's relations with Northumbria.

Chapter five will examine King Edmund's legislation and how it fits into the contemporary political context sketched in chapter four. It will also examine King Edmund's relationship with Archbishop Oda of Canterbury, and will speculate about the administration of the English kingdom in the mid-tenth-century. It will be argued that King Edmund's legislation shows an ambition towards tighter control of the localities through increased cooperation between all levels of government, and that king and archbishop were working closely together in restructuring the English administrative framework. Finally it is proposed that such sentiments observable in King Edmund's legislation throw light on the process through which the king and his advisors were continuing the process of administrating Wessex, Mercia and the Eastern Danelaw not as separate kingdoms, but as a more unified English one.

Chapter six will closely examine King Edmund's immediate family, specifically the influence of his mother and his two wives. It will reinforce the notion that Queen Eadgifu's life and position were steeped in dynastic politics, and will put forward some conclusions as to how she actively manipulated the royal marriage policy for the benefit not only for her own family, but also to unite England more comprehensively throughout the reigns of her sons and grandsons. It will also show how King Edmund's two wives each assumed distinct roles during their own lifetimes as queens, mothers and widows, and how Edmund's marriages were influenced by contemporary political and regional concerns. Throughout the chapter the theme of Eadgifu's relationship with both her sons and King Edmund's wives will show that the royal family was exceptionally united in maintaining dynastic stability, enhancing the king's own royal authority, and preserving close relations with the aristocracy.

A final chapter will consist of concluding remarks, and will attempt to bring the thesis together further as a whole. While the various chapters may appear, *prima facie*, as disjointed and incongruent variations on a subject, there are issues and personalities that permeate the thesis as a whole. Overall the thesis attempts to put forward the case that King Edmund's reign experienced a significant reassessment of political goals. Due to political factors both within the areas of Wessex and Mercia, and between the kingdoms under Edmund's control and Northumbria, an innovative and energetic outlook began to take shape towards royal administration and the king's place within the existing structures. This transition was marked in part by a small yet significant shift away from a reliance on traditional West Saxon administrative structures and the power blocs that had enjoyed influence under King Athelstan, towards increased cooperation with interests and families from Mercia and East Anglia. Such changes in policy and alignment were advanced under the auspices of certain powerful families from these areas, seemingly in conjunction with Archbishop Oda of Canterbury and reinforced through a high level of cooperation and cohesion between members of the royal family.

Several themes permeate the thesis, which will now be outlined. As has hopefully been made clear above, King Edmund's reign is relatively, but not entirely understudied, and this thesis is an attempt to rectify certain oversights and fill a gap in England's early history. While it may appear that King Edmund's reign is under documented, it is in fact comparatively rich in source material. The dissertation intends to show just how valuable it can be when approached in an interdisciplinary fashion, with a focus on political developments within a short period of time. This requires the squeezing and cajoling of the sources, and admittedly a great deal of speculation is involved. It might be said that the thesis behind the thesis is that there

exists potential gold within the details, and that matters of historical minutiae can help elucidate larger historical issues and problems. King Edmund has so often been compared directly with his elder brother Athelstan and his son Edgar, and this tendency obscures our interpretation of both his achievements, as well as his disappointments. Such comparison will be eschewed in the arguments to come, which attempt to measure King Edmund more alongside his contemporaries than against his predecessors and successors. King Edmund's biographer has yet to appear, and it is hoped that this study will be a step towards just that eventuality.

Chapter II:

Textual Histories: The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and its Recensions

It is prudent to begin with what is the initial source for nearly all incursions into Anglo-Saxon studies, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is not a single chronicle at all, but a conflation of various annals, chronicles, and anecdotes from various other sources, often untraceable. There are great swathes of information from certain years that have been directly copied from one version of the *Chronicle* to another, and some of the extant versions are outright copies of other extant versions. Furthermore it has been long recognized that as the different recensions were composed and added to at different locales and at different times, regional differences can be observed. This has led to great confusion at times, as there is no complete consensus as to which version is to have primacy. Subsequently it has been common practice amongst scholars to treat each version as a chronicle of itself, citing relevant passages by recension instead of by general year.

The picture is clouded further by the fact that the contemporary composition dates of most recensions continue to be elusive. It remains difficult if not impossible to determine whether a particular annal was composed contemporarily, or with the benefit of hindsight. One example of an instance where it can be established that this was the case is in the series of incredibly detailed yearly records from about 980-1016 in several recensions of the *ASC*. They concern the series of disastrous military and organizational blunders endured by the English kingdom during the years of the heaviest Viking onslaught England had seen in nearly a century. Language condemning the poor military decisions by King Æthelred and his advisors abound, and there are multiple observations

on behavior that could only have been made some time later than the actual event in question. For example, in the annal for 1003 the annalist states that, “Then Ealdorman Ælfric was to lead the army, but he was up to his old tricks.”¹ The chronicler goes on in later annals to criticize Ælfric for further treacheries; the author is composing with the advantage of perception after the fact, as his bias against certain members of the royal court makes clear.²

This sort of observation can prove valuable in understanding the motivations behind the recording of certain annals. For instance, if a certain year’s events were written down within a relatively short time after the events actually happened, it might be assumed to a certain degree that the accounts had little time to be influenced by the benefit of hindsight. These kinds of questions become relevant when issues of popular memory are considered, and how the recollections of a certain individual or period of time came to be remembered and recorded. Perhaps the reasons behind the present-day lack of information, as well as what is known, are to be found in the way that King Edmund and his times have been presented in the narrative chronicles.

The present chapter proposes the argument that there were distinct regional and local differences in the way that contemporaries recorded and remembered King Edmund and his deeds, and that these differences have colored interpretation down to the present day. These differences can be seen to begin very soon after the king’s death, and continued well into the late tenth and early eleventh century. Furthermore, it is by unraveling the possible reasons behind these proclivities in the annals that more might be

¹ ASC ‘E’, sub anno 1003. “Ða sceolde se ealdorman Ælfric lædan þa fyrde, ac he teah ða forð his ealdan wrencas.”

² See Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 205-7.

learnt about King Edmund's reign and the decades that followed it than the actual text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* allows.

Unfortunately, or perhaps luckily, only one extant MS of the *Chronicle* can be proven to have been written during the mid-tenth century. It is a unique resource that is deserving of special attention.³ MS 'A', commonly known as the Parker Chronicle, has had a great deal of attention given it over the last four centuries, and this author claims no editorial prowess.⁴ All the same, there are some observations to be made here with the present context in mind. Questions as to the supposed dates of composition for the annal records dealing with King Edmund and his time should therefore be addressed.⁵

Approaching MS 'A' in this regard is difficult, as some hands very closely resemble others. Scribal consistency after all was a highly desirable trait in the middle ages, and this has contributed to the difficulty of hand identification. Charles Plummer, in his highly influential and still used *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel* identified fourteen hands.⁶ Subsequent editors such as N.R. Ker identified five⁷, and M.B. Parkes settled on six pre-eleventh-century hands⁸, while David Dumville sees ten or possibly

³ The most recent editions of the various MSS of the ASC have been consulted in the present discussion, *The Collaborative Edition*, edited generally by David Dumville and Simon Keynes. All quotes from the specific texts will be cited by MSS and year, while citations from the editorial comments will be cited by individual editor and page number.

⁴ See Stanley B. Greenfield & F.C. Robinson, *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature to the end of 1972* (Manchester, 1980), 346-7.

⁵ This kind of specific dating of the recording of certain annals is based on paleographical principles of identifying different hands, and comparing these individual hands with other examples of contemporary scripts.

⁶ Charles Plummer (ed.), *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, with Supplementary Extracts from the Others. A Revised Text on the Basis of an Edition by John Earle* (2 Vols., Oxford, 1892/9), xxv-xxvi.

⁷ N.R. Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts containing Anglo-Saxon* (Oxford, 1957), 58.

⁸ M.B. Parkes, "The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript of the *Chronicle*, Laws and Sedulius, and Historiography at Winchester in the Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries", *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976), 149-71, at 154.

eleven pre-twelfth-century scribes.⁹ Janet Bately, the most recent editor of MS 'A', has largely agreed with previous editors' opinions on the dating of certain passages, but her figure of sixteen hands sets a new maximum.¹⁰ While there is disagreement over the total number of hands, there exists a general consensus on the number and identity of the mid-tenth-century hands. Of primary concern are two particular scribes identified by Bately, namely her Scribe 3 and Scribe 7. They will be dealt with in turn in the discussion of MS 'A', and below in our discussion of the other recensions.

Bately identifies the scribe responsible for fos. 26r-27v of the new Quire IV, consisting of the annals 924-55, as her Hand 3.¹¹ There is some confusion as to whether or not part of the entry for 955 was recorded by a new hand, as Dumville has suggested, or the same Hand 3 writing at some time removed.¹² It should be noted that both Ker and Plummer agree with Bately's assignment, but Dumville's observation does raise eyebrows.¹³ Bately notes that, "The Script used by scribe 3 is the Square miniscule typical of the 940s and 950s in general and the charters of Eadred and Eadwig in particular."¹⁴ This establishes the high probability that the scribe in question was one of sufficiently mature age, and as the similarity of script suggests, had been trained sometime close to, if not during the reign of King Edmund and perhaps Eadred as well.

Bately goes on to state:

⁹ David Dumville, "Some Aspects of Annalistic Writing at Canterbury in the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries", *Peritia* 2 (1983), 23-57, at 42.

¹⁰ Janet M. Bately (ed.), *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle*, MS A, A Collaborative Edition Vol. 3, (Bury St. Edmunds, 1986), xxi-xliv.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xxi.

¹² Dumville, *Wessex and England From Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural, and Ecclesiastical Revival*, chapter three.

¹³ Bately rejects Dumville's distinction on the basis of her conclusion that despite the fact that the ink for annal 955 appears lighter, it "is not of itself an indication of change of hand." See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A*, xxxiv, n.93.

¹⁴ Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A*, xxxv.

“Since the evenness of the script appears to indicate that the annals were entered not year by year but page by page and all at the same time, and since the last annal-number entered by this scribe appears to have been that for 956, Ker’s dating of mid-tenth century is unlikely to be mistaken.”¹⁵

If this is correct, it is significant for two reasons. First, whoever was recording those entries for the annals between 924 and 955 was doing so relatively soon after the actual events being chronicled. It seems a forgone conclusion that individual annals were composed soon after the events they describe, indeed if not immediately after. However, the uniqueness of MS ‘A’ allows one to see that even during the mid-tenth-century chronicles were being added to and compiled in large swathes, as opposed to being written down year by year. Whether or not the chronicler identified as Hand 3 was copying the text directly from earlier source material or composing the annals himself is of course an important distinction to make, and may prove a pivotal point, but there are further peculiarities to MS ‘A’ that should be mentioned before that question is addressed.

Bately has also noticed a subsection in the annals written by her Scribe 3 that is possibly significant. It would appear that the scribe responsible for the block of annals from 924-55 briefly changed his method of entering the individual annals on the page. The annals having a different layout structure are virtually co-terminus with King Edmund’s reign. Bately notes that,

“...in the section written by scribe 3, annals 937-946 are found also in MSS. B, C, and D and must have formed a single block; not only is there no line-saving here, but there is a change of layout from the scribe’s own earlier and later practice, with annal-material overlapping with the column of annal numbers, not kept in a single column.”¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid, xxxv.

¹⁶ Ibid, xlix.

Several of the annal numbers appear to have been erased by the scribe, and the guideline seems to have been changed as well. Bately attributes this to a “change of mind by the scribe”.¹⁷ It has been argued elsewhere that the variations in layout and space-saving techniques employed by the scribes (indeed, aberrations such as this are present in other sections of the MS) may have been entered at a later date, but Bately notes that there is no corresponding change in the style of script.¹⁸ This same change in layout is present in only one other recension of the *Chronicle*, MS ‘G’, the version that has been universally accepted as a direct copy of MS ‘A’.

So there appears to be a situation where the series of annals from 924-55 were written down c.956, *en bloc*. The annalist was more likely than not associated somehow with the royal court, as the style of script used suggests an acquaintance with the production of charters roundabout that time. In addition to these details, the annals dealing specifically with the reign of King Edmund would appear to have been entered in a noticeably different method of page-layout. Bately suggests that these differences in layout could be attributed to a change in the source material used by Scribe 3, as the annals 937-46 are also found in MSS B, C, and D, but without the changes in format.¹⁹ If one ignores for a moment anything present in the actual text of the *Chronicle*, what can be made of this? First of all one can perceive that Bately’s Scribe 3, working well within the accepted period of living memory of King Edmund’s reign, appears to have paid special attention to the annal years dealing with his reign. The scribe may very well have experienced a lack of source material with which to complete his annals; alternately, he may have decided to change his source based on some other stimulus. This is not

¹⁷ Ibid, lix.

¹⁸ Ibid, xlix.

¹⁹ Ibid, lix.

conclusive of anything in and of itself, but it is mildly suggestive of the period in question having suffered from source problems, such as a lack of information, or perhaps the existence of a source uniquely available to scribe 3.

MS 'A' contains few differences in content and language from the other various recensions, with a few notable exceptions. One of these peculiarities may prove significant. In nearly all versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* there is a poem in alliterative verse celebrating Edmund's military victory in 942 over the Danes in Mercia and the 'redemption' of the Five Boroughs. In all *Chronicle* recensions save MS 'A', King Edmund is identified as the "protector of men."²⁰ MS 'A' is unique in that he is identified as the "protector of kinsman."²¹ While there appear to be later corrections and additions made to this particular annal by Bately's Scribe 7²², the particular word *maga*, as opposed to *mægþa*, does not seem to have been changed; it can therefore be positively identified with hand 3. It is possibly a scribal error.

However the different word changes the context of the poem significantly. Was this particular word copied directly from the original source, or was it modified and added by the scribe in the mid 950's? In either case it is language of a highly personal nature, and its unique presence in MS 'A' raises questions as to the scribe's interests and possible motivations. The "kinsman" addition, when considered alongside the specific changes in format are far from conclusive evidence for the identification of a scribal agenda, and one is not necessarily suggested here. However, the idiosyncrasies surrounding MS 'A's version do raise questions. If the annal entries for 937-46 match so

²⁰ MS 'B': "*mæggea mundbora*". MS 'C': "*mecga mundbora*". MS 'D': "*mægþa mundbora*". MSS 'E' and 'F' do not contain the poem.

²¹ "*maga mundbora*".

²² Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A*, xxxix.

closely those present in B, C, and D, why then does scribe 3 change his format so drastically? Is there any significance in the fact that these dates are virtually identical to King Edmund's primacy? If the scribe was drawing on a peculiar source for these annals, would it have contained the different wording? The answers to these questions are far from clear, but there exist possible leads.

It has been assumed that before the Parker manuscript was translated to Christ Church, Canterbury sometime around 1006, it resided at Winchester.²³ Bately notes that there are multiple additions unique to MS 'A' that can be shown to relate to the Winchester diocese, and that some of her identified scribes can be associated with other Winchester manuscripts written in the early tenth-century.²⁴ Further traces in the text lend credibility to this assumption, such as the inscription "FRIDESTAN *diacon*" present in the fifth 'booklet' of the MS, possibly the same Frithestan who was made bishop in 909, and the fact that "special prominence on the page is given to the reference to the appointment of Æthelwold as bishop of Winchester in 963."²⁵ More than any other location, Winchester would be the place most expected to be a haven of readily available information on West Saxon royalty, not to mention official "propaganda". It seems highly unlikely then that a chronicler working there would encounter difficulties with source material. The notion that MS 'A' was compiled in Winchester, more importantly in the heart of the West Saxon administrative ambit, should be kept well in mind when the other versions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* are closely examined.

²³ See Parkes, "The Paleography of the Parker Manuscript", 171; and also Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A*, xiii. Bately also notes that Dumville has reservations regarding this assignment, and proposes caution.

²⁴ Bately, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle A*, xiii, xxxii-xxxix.

²⁵ *Ibid*, xiii. Frithestan was ordained in 909 and died in 932.

Analysis has begun with the relevant narrative sources of the 'A' version of the *ASC*, as this serves to contrast the remaining versions that must be addressed, namely 'B', 'C', and 'D'. They will each be discussed, appropriately enough, in alphabetical order. This arrangement is not for reasons of simplicity, but instead by fortunate happenstance; as it is precisely in this order of approach that the broader implications of this investigation will best be explored and hopefully made clear. MS 'B' was written by a single scribe sometime in the third quarter of the tenth century. It contains annals from 60 B.C. to 977 A.D., followed by a copy of the West Saxon Genealogical Regnal List ending with King Edward the Martyr.²⁶ MS 'B' is interesting for several reasons, not least of which is the fact that it contains no information that is not available in one or another extant version of the *ASC*; all its peculiarities are either textual or linguistic. MS 'B' also shares a distinct relationship with MS 'C', which has led to the two MSS traditionally being examined together. The same approach will be pursued here, with the majority of comments on MS 'C' being mentioned in the context of MS 'B'.

One should begin with 'B's relationship to 'A'. As noted above, the group of annals from 924-55 present in MS 'A' was written down *en bloc*, and the inexplicable change of format for the years 937-46 has been observed. Simon Taylor, MS 'B's most recent editor, has agreed with previous editors of the text that while there are parts of MS 'A' that have been copied into MS 'B', none of 'B' has been copied into 'A'.²⁷ None of the entries copied from 'A' into 'B' are after 915, so the possibility that the annal material for the period 939-46 came from 'A' can be rejected. It is interesting that there

²⁶ Simon Taylor (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. 'B', A Collaborative Edition Vol. 4* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1983), xi.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, xiii. Taylor refers here to A. Lutz, "Das Studium der Angelsächsischen Chronik im 16. Jahrhundert: Nowell und Joscelyn", *Anglia* 100 (1982), 301-356, at 339.

are oddities in the dating structure in 'B' similar to those found in MS 'A'. Taylor has noted that 'B' is fundamentally different to every other version of the *Chronicle* in the way its annal-numbers are presented. He notes that:

“The annal-numbers in B appear practically without a break, even for the years, which have no entry, until 652, after which date they appear only very sporadically till 947 when a continuous series begins again. It is therefore convenient to take 652 and 946 as terminal points of different sections.”²⁸

The date 652 is a little too early to be relevant to the present purpose, but the fact that in MS 'B' a break in format at precisely the same annal year as MS 'A' can be observed is striking. This is all the more interesting when it is borne in mind that by this point the 'B' recension appears to have been wholly independent of 'A'. This is made quite apparent by the fact that much of the material dealing with the period surrounding King Edmund's reign is assigned to different years than in MSS 'A' or 'C'. For example, the *Battle of Brunanburh* poem is placed in 938-9 (dated 937 by ACDE), while 'B' “clearly assigns two separate years to the *Five Boroughs* poem”, which 'A' and 'C' both assign to 942.²⁹

Peculiarities such as these allow comment and speculation as to the origins of both 'B' and 'C', that is, the possible exemplars of the texts. These and other observations have led Taylor to make a few hypotheses regarding 'B' and 'C's respective exemplars. He believes that 'C' had 'B' as its exemplar for those annals up to 652, and also for the material from 956 up to where 'B' cuts off at the year 977. Furthermore, Taylor suggests that 'C's exemplar for the annals from 653 to 946 may have been the

²⁸ Taylor, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. 'B'*, xxviii.

²⁹ *Ibid*, xxxiii.

exemplar used by the individual who compiled 'B'.³⁰ To summarize, Taylor suggests that both 'B' and 'C' were copying from the same source for the annals between 653 and 946, and that 'C' annals before 652 and after 956 were copied directly from 'B'. Thus it would appear that the shared exemplar was copied sometime relatively soon after King Edmund's death.

The fact that neither 'B' nor 'C' contain any entries for the years 947-56 has been generally, but not specifically, attributed to the fact that both recensions have been traditionally associated with the abbey of Abingdon. Abingdon was re-founded by Æthelwold in 956, after it had seemingly been abandoned in or around 946, and it has been concluded that no chronicling was taking place there during that time.³¹

When it is remembered that the scribe responsible for entering the annals for the years between 924x55 in MS 'A' did so at one go, and probably right around the time that Abingdon was being re-endowed, one finds the possibility of a further connection between the 'A' and 'B' recensions of the *Chronicle* and Abingdon. If not for the actual recensions themselves, surely this is circumstantial evidence for some kind of connection between their exemplars. One still ponders the possible reasons as to why the 'B' scribe may have willfully omitted the material between 947 and 956. The matching dates for the reign of King Eadred may be more than just a coincidence.³²

³⁰ Ibid, xxxvii.

³¹ See Patrick W. Conner (ed.), *The Abingdon Chronicle, A.D. 956-1066 (MS. C, With Reference to BDE), The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition Vol. 10* (Cambridge, 1996), xiv.

³² The fact that those annals dealing with King Edmund's reign appear to have been deemed unimportant by whomever was compiling 'B' may be significant. It is not yet safe to make concrete conclusions from this, but it could be postulated that King Edmund was remembered fondly at Abingdon after his death, and his younger brother Eadred may not have been remembered with the same affection. This is important also when it is remembered that it was towards the end of Edmund's reign that Abingdon was deserted in the first place.

The only reliable version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for these missing years is MS 'D'. While the peculiar details found in MS 'A' have been mentioned, 'D' contains far more unique and pertinent information for the events of King Edmund's reign. Before they are discussed, 'D's local proclivities must first be addressed. N.R. Ker long ago dated 'D's composition to the middle of the eleventh century on paleographical grounds, and while its composition is rather far removed from the mid-tenth-century, a discussion of its peculiarities should prove telling.³³

G.P. Cubbin, in his recent edition of MS 'D' has laid out the various sources that the compiler of the manuscript used over the course of its composition. According to Cubbin's analysis, 'D' used the exemplar of 'C' for the annals up to 952, and from then on it copied the exemplar of 'E'. MS 'E' abbreviated some pertinent material (interestingly enough the entries for the years 937, 940, and 944x6), and so 'C's exemplar was "manifestly the better text" for these years.³⁴ Cubbin rules out any connection between MS 'D' and 'A', and proceeds to make some speculations regarding the source of the details that are unique to 'D'. The textual influences on 'D' that cannot be attributed to another version of the *Chronicle* are overwhelmingly northern and western. That is, the sources that 'D' copied from can be associated with local interests, and certain details can be shown to have been lifted from other narrative sources that can be traced to York and West Mercia.

Before discussion turns to the sources, an examination of what the compiler of 'D' saw fit to include from them should be addressed. The correspondence with the other texts of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is striking. Annal entries for the years 941, 943, 947-

³³ Ker, *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*, 254.

³⁴ G.P. Cubbin (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. 'D', A Collaborative Edition*, Vol. 6 (Bury St. Edmunds, 1996), xxxvi-xxxvii.

8 and 957 can be shown to be related, loosely it is admitted, both by Cubbin and this author, with entries found in the *Historia Regum* by Simeon of Durham. The northern affinities do not end here. Cubbin notes that there are several Mercian details not found in other chronicles:

“This leaves very little [annal material] that cannot be accounted for by the assumption that D...had available \C, \E and the northern annals...The material concerned is notably from York and Mercia: only the very small amount of material on Mercia might suggest a further source, but it scarcely does so compellingly.”³⁵

The amount of material dealing specifically with Mercian issues is indeed scarce, as is the amount of details dealing specifically with York. But when exactly what is included in the text of these small details unique to ‘D’ is examined in detail, it can be observed that they can not only be associated with certain locales, but also more generally with King Edmund and his lifetime. It is worthwhile to list these:³⁶

- 943: The details of Wulfrun’s being taken captive in the Danish raid on Tamworth.³⁷
- 946: The naming of Pucklechurch as the location of King Edmund’s demise.
- 946: The specific circumstances of King Edmund’s murder.³⁸
- 946: Æthelflæd of Damerham identified as King Edmund’s queen.
- 955: King Eadwig of the West Saxons and King Edgar of Mercia are both identified as the sons of King Edmund and St Ælfgifu.³⁹

³⁵ Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. ‘D’*, xxxviii.

³⁶ Identified and Listed in Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle MS. ‘D’*, xxxviii.

³⁷ Wulfrun’s kidnapping will be discussed further in chapter four.

³⁸ These particular details from the annal for 946 will be discussed much more below.

³⁹ It is interesting that ‘E’ identifies Eadwig as “Edmund’s son,” (*Eadmundes sunu*) omitting St Ælfgifu. No other version of the ASC identifies Eadwig’s or Edgar’s parentage.

- 958: The notice of archbishop Oda's separation of King Eadwig and Ælfifu on grounds of consanguinity.

The emphasis on King Edmund and his progeny is noticeable. There is also a hint of gendered interest here, what with the importance placed on Wulfrun, royal parentage, and marriage.

Cubbin believes, based on his comparison with MS 'E', that 'D' may have used another set, or possibly sets, of northern annals, unidentified and now lost.⁴⁰ This allows two possible conclusions, one slightly more tenable than the other. First, there is a high likelihood that a set or sets of annals associated with and identified by northern and Mercian material was seemingly well informed, and that this now lost source or sources were consulted when 'D' was written in the mid-eleventh-century. Secondly, one can observe that certain pieces of information dealing with King Edmund and his reign seems to have been recorded in the north of the country where matters pertaining to Mercia were of some interest.

It may be possible to localize this Mercian context for information from King Edmund's reign further. In MS 'D' the greatest number of specific local or regional references are directed either towards the north of Worcester or to the diocese itself. The individual entries are far too many to list here, and have already been done so by Cubbin.⁴¹ It was on the basis of this tendency towards Worcestershire oriented material that originally led 'D's previous editors, namely Plummer, Atkins, and Keller, to believe that the compilation of MS 'D' had been begun in Worcester in the mid-tenth-century.⁴² The manuscript's origins were associated in particular with Bishop Oswald of Worcester

⁴⁰ Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. 'D'*, lxi.

⁴¹ See *ibid.*, lxx-lxxiii.

⁴² *Ibid.*, lxvii.

(961-92) and archbishop of York (971-92). Cubbin notes, "For Keller, Oswald was a persuasive circumstantial link between the traditional interest in the diocese of York and this new interest in west Mercia."⁴³ As mentioned above, it cannot be the case that Oswald was directly responsible for MS 'D', as 'D' was copied at one go in the eleventh century, and therefore "all such speculation is made redundant."⁴⁴ Indeed, Cubbin has argued persuasively that it was in fact Aldred, bishop of Worcester from c.1046-62, and bishop of York from 1061-69 who was responsible for the creation of 'D'.⁴⁵

However, an Oswald connection should perhaps not be ruled out completely. While deconstructing Plummer and Keller's argument, Cubbin notes an observation by C.R. Hart, where Hart states that it is likely that Oswald "was in favor of the copying of books between the two centers" while he held the sees in plurality.⁴⁶ It must be remembered that Oswald was the nephew of Archbishop Oda of Canterbury (941-58). Oda owed his original appointment to the archdiocese to King Edmund, and their political relationship, as shall be shown in later chapters, was decidedly intimate. It is possible to speculate that some, if not all of the Mercian and York oriented material found in 'D' might have come from sources originally linked to Oswald. If the hypothetical lost northern sources contained, as is suspected, a different record for many events of King Edmund's reign, as well as individuals associated with him, than the exemplars for 'C' and 'E', 'D's other sources, then Oswald or circles associated with him emerge as a possible source for the additional northern material.

⁴³ Ibid, lxvii.

⁴⁴ Ibid, lxvii.

⁴⁵ Ibid, lxxviii-lxxix.

⁴⁶ See C.R. Hart, "The Ramsay 'Computus'", *English Historical Review* 85 (1970), 29-44, at 38, and also Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. 'D'*, lxi.

Not only is there comparatively *more* annal material present in ‘D’ for the reign of King Edmund, the nature of that material can be closely associated with Oswald and his circle. The first clue that points to Oswald and (more particularly) Oda as the possible sources for the annal material unique to ‘D’ is the entry for 946, which records Edmund’s murder. What is unique to ‘D’ is the additional information that “Æthelflaed of Damerham, Ealdorman Ælfgar’s daughter, was then his queen.”⁴⁷ This is an extremely specific addition, and one is also struck by the personal nature of the language. The fact that she is identified as not just any Æthelflaed, but a specific individual from a specific place (*æt Domerhame*), suggests not only familiarity, but also the conscious desire to identify and distinguish her on the part of the scribe. It sounds as if it were written by somebody who, if he did not know Æthelflaed herself on a personal level, knew of her.

Ælfgar, the ealdorman of Essex from 947 to 951, was a prominent East Anglian landowner whose two daughters can only be described as having both married very, very well.⁴⁸ It is possible to tie his family tentatively with the family of Oda and Oswald. The Old English wills of Ealdorman Ælfgar, as well as his two daughters, have survived, and they bolster our knowledge of landholding and the family’s role in Suffolk and Essex during their lifetimes. It would appear that as early as 951, the earliest time that Ælfgar’s will can be dated, it was his intention to endow substantially a monastery at Stoke-by-Nayland in Suffolk. The will of Ælfflaed, his younger daughter, is also concerned with a desire to realize her father’s aspirations for such an endowment. Cyril Hart notes that if it had proceeded at the time Ælfgar proposed, it would be “our earliest evidence for lay participation in the English Benedictine reformation, which did not really get underway

⁴⁷ ASC ‘D’, sub anno. “7 Æþelflæd æt Domerhame, Ælfgares dohter ealdormannes, wæs þa his quen.”

⁴⁸ See below, chapter six.

until 964.”⁴⁹ Both Oda and his nephew Oswald’s family came from East Anglia,⁵⁰ and their close relationship with lay magnates interested in Benedictine monasticism in the tenth-century is well attested.⁵¹

While unrelated to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, there is further evidence to suggest that Archbishop Oda may have influenced the memory of King Edmund and those close to him. Simon Keynes has observed that there is a curious entry in the confraternity book of Pfäfers, in which it is written: “Athelstan rex. Otmundus rex. Odgiva. Odo archiepiscopus.”⁵² The reference to both the king and the archbishop date the entry to between 941x6, and the Odgiva is most likely Eadgifu, Edmund’s mother. Keynes reasons that a visit by Oda and his entourage is “possible, but not assured”, but one could hazard that his presence was more likely than not.⁵³ It suggests the possibility that Oda was at the very least interested in promoting the memory and image of the West Saxon royal house. It also suggests that Queen Eadgifu may have had an influence on Oda’s actions, and it may be further suggested that if Oda was responsible for the information, it could be biased in favor of the queen mother and her interests.

It is therefore within the realm of possibility to suggest that the information unique to MS ‘D’ may have been recorded and transmitted on account of the influence of Oda, Oswald, and their shared interests. There is also the possibility that the information could be associated with King Edmund’s mother Eadgifu. If this is the case, one is presented with the problem of attempting to see through the biases that may have

⁴⁹ Hart, *The Danelaw*, 468.

⁵⁰ *Vita Sancti Odonis*, in Andrew J Turner and Bernard J. Muir (ed. and trans.), *Eadmer of Canterbury, Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*, 1.

⁵¹ Their relationship will receive detailed attention in chapter six.

⁵² Keynes, “King Athelstan’s books”, 201. See St. Gallen, Stiftsarchiv, Cod. Fabariensis I, 33.

⁵³ Keynes, “King Athelstan’s books”, 201.

influenced the inclusion or exclusion of the certain unique pieces of information found in MS 'D'. If, as is suspected, Oda and later on Oswald were interested in preserving not only the memory of King Edmund and those closely allied with him, but presenting it in a favorable light, it becomes increasingly difficult to get through the biases. MS 'D' contains a further textual peculiarity that warrants discussion. This particular piece of information should also facilitate a cohesive transition into the next section of the discussion of later narrative sources. It is found in the same entry as the note dealing with Æthelflæd of Damerham, directly preceding it in the annal for the year 946. The entry begins thus:

“In this year King Edmund died on St Augustine’s day. *It was widely known how he ended his life*, that Leofa stabbed him at Pucklechurch.”⁵⁴

The fact of Leofa having stabbed King Edmund is not under dispute, and this point will be addressed further below. What is immediately striking is the preamble to the fact that the chronicler was trying to convey, which has been italicized. It could imply that news did indeed spread far and wide, but there would seem to be little reason for stating so; it goes without saying that a king’s death would be well known. The chronicler seemingly felt it necessary to qualify his statement with the assertion that his information is reliable, based on his allegation that everybody knows it, so it must be true. It attempts to secure the fact as common knowledge. This immediately suggests the existence of divergent accounts, or possibly oral traditions, that existed alongside what the chronicler conveyed. The real problem is how to attribute this part of the entry. Was it part of 'D's original exemplar, or was it an addition by the scribe who collated the manuscript in the mid-

⁵⁴ ASC 'D' sub anno 946, my italics. “*Her Eadmund cyning forðferde on sancte Agustinus mæssedæge. Þæt wæs wide cuð hu he his dagas geendode, - þæt Liofa hine ofstang æt Puclancyrca.*”

eleventh-century? If it were composed in the eleventh century, the passage could be evidence of popular tradition; which would in turn suggest that Edmund's assassination was a very significant event indeed, and long remembered.

However, if it is accepted that the probability that this part of the entry for 946, if not the entry in its entirety, was composed sometime during the tenth-century for a contemporary or near-contemporary audience, perhaps one that was not too far removed from the events in question, problems arise. Why does its author seem so keen on establishing his version of events as known far and wide, as essentially incontrovertible? When dealing with this kind of entry, one treads on the boggy ground of popular memory, legend, and saga. The possibilities are truly endless. However, there are leads. In addition to the note concerning Æthelflæd of Damerham and the common knowledge stipulation, MS 'D' is also the only *Chronicle* recension to name the place of King Edmund's death as Pucklechurch (*Pucelancyrca*). This place name is found in only one other near-contemporary source, the text of a forged charter from King Eadred's reign pertaining to a rather large donation of land at that location to Glastonbury Abbey.⁵⁵ The charter in question has been regarded as genuine in the past, but more recent comment has strengthened the case for its being a forgery, based on charters from the 950s.⁵⁶

What is most interesting, besides the fact that the location came to be associated specifically with King Edmund's death, is that the charter states that King Eadred was confirming a previous grant by Edmund.⁵⁷ If it was a forgery, it is a prime example of an

⁵⁵ S 553.

⁵⁶ Lesley Abrams, *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment*, Studies in Anglo-Saxon History VIII (Woodbridge, 1996), 211-14.

⁵⁷ "Quapropter ego Eadredus gratia Dei Anglorum rex cuidam monasterio quod celebri Glastingabyri nuncupatur onomate . dono quandam villam XXV . cassatorum quae Pucelancyrca appellatur . pro animæ ereptione fratris mei Eadmundi regis quem admodum ipse prius me annuente prædicto loco condonaverat." S 553.

interested party taking advantage of King Edmund's memory for the territorial gain of Glastonbury. With this in mind, it makes one wonder whether or not the entry in MS 'D' was meant to reinforce this association between the property, Edmund's memory, and Glastonbury's (possibly disputed?) possession of the estate in question. Edmund was after all closely associated with the abbey through his own connection to Abbot Dunstan, and it is not surprising that his popular memory should have been maintained here, if indeed it did not originate from within its walls. The most recent editor of MS 'D' agrees, somewhat, when he notes, "At the price of some subjectivity, one might venture that the 946 Pucklechurch entry has an air of a more vigorous local interest." Indeed. Cubbin then qualifies this statement by raising the point that, "...this gives us no clue as to the date of the entry. It may be based on local traditions still alive just over a century later."⁵⁸ It seems more likely that the information unique to 'D' was composed earlier rather than later, as already suggested, based on the personal nature of the specific information. But the notion that popular local tradition associating the vill of Pucklechurch with King Edmund's death was still alive in the mid-eleventh century raises far more questions than answers, and should not be entirely discounted. If there was a local interest nearly a century after the event, it would appear to have had no mean endurance as a popular tradition.

When one returns to the northern sources that seem to contain more information in general dealing with Edmund and his reign, one can notice a further more specific connection with St Oswald. An obscure set of relatively sparse annals found in the *Ramsey Computus* contains much information found only in 'D' and 'E', including the name of King Edmund's killer, Leofa (*Liofa*) in the annal for 946. Ramsey Abbey was

⁵⁸ Cubbin, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS. 'D'*, lxvii.

the only fenland monastery not established by St Æthelwold during the Benedictine reformation; St Oswald undertook that house's foundation. Hart has shown that the Ramsey annalist appears to not only have had at his disposal a Latin chronicle believed to have originated at York, but that "for the tenth and eleventh centuries...he translated annals from an archetype of the 'D' and 'E' versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle"⁵⁹.

Hart goes on to suggest that this archetype was sent south from York to Ramsey Abbey in order to supplement the annals being compiled there, roundabout 984x8.⁶⁰ If correct, this would connect further the northern version of events, their greater body of information dealing with King Edmund, and their association with St Oswald. As Hart has noted, the dates that appear most likely to have witnessed the transmission of the D/E archetype from York to Ramsey coincide with the appearance and residency of Abbo of Fleury at Ramsey Abbey. While Abbo only remained there for a few years, he is said to have become quite fond of the place, and he is known to have written prolifically there.⁶¹

It may be little more than an interesting coincidence, but it was here that Abbo is believed to have composed his *Passio S. Eadmundi*, an account of the martyring of the East Anglian King in 869. If the D/E archetype did not already contain the entry for 946 explaining the circumstances of our King Edmund's death by this time, might Abbo have added these words? Abbo had a keen interest in St Edmund, and from his own association with Oswald he must surely have had access to the details of our King Edmund's death. Abbo could have composed the entry for the purposes of clarity, to

⁵⁹ Hart, "The Ramsey 'Computus,'" 35.

⁶⁰ See Hart, "The Ramsey Computus", 38: "Now Professor Whitelock has postulated the existence of an archetype of both 'D' and 'E' which was compiled at York, and moved south after 1031. It seems likely to me that between 984 and 988 St. Oswald sent down to Ramsey a copy of this archetype, for although the Ramsey Annals continue to use the Chronicle until at least 1036, one finds that from 988 onwards they approximate more closely, on the whole, to the 'E' than to the 'D' version. It is tempting to associate this change with the arrival of Abbo at Ramsey..."

⁶¹ Raine, *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops I*, 431 and 460-1.

reduce any possible confusion between the two kings' deaths. It is not beyond the realm of possibility that some degree of misunderstanding may have arisen between the popular stories of two murdered monarchs of the same name.

The various recensions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* show that the information for King Edmund's reign cannot be addressed without taking certain facts into consideration. One is presented with what appear to be regional differences regarding how King Edmund was remembered, and also the notion that it was on the impetus of certain individuals who were interested in perpetuating this memory. The evidence is far from conclusive, but there is reason to believe that the partiality of certain individuals close to the royal family has partially determined what the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* tells us about King Edmund's reign. It appears that certain details of King Edmund's reign were recorded with a decidedly Mercian / Northern (as well as East Anglian?) perspective; and that Eadgifu, Archbishop Oda, St Oswald and their immediate circle may well lie behind this association. While the transmission of information surrounding King Edmund and his deeds cannot wholly be explained and delineated, it does suggest to that the complexities of his reign (at the very least, how it was remembered by contemporaries and subsequent generations) must be handled with a considerable amount of care.

Textual Transmission, Saga, and the Fluidity of Tradition

So far the various recensions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* have been examined and attempts have been made to determine what their original sources may have been, and who may have influenced the content of the annal material for the events surrounding

King Edmund's reign. Attention will now turn to the group of sources first influenced by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which have in turn influenced later scholars. The twelfth-century histories of Anglo-Saxon England, written by clerics who were mindful to re-examine the pre-Conquest past in the context of the still developing Anglo-Norman social identity, have influenced the way modern scholars have approached the study of Anglo-Saxon England in innumerable and profound ways.

It has been observed how both contemporary and later generations of English chroniclers recorded the events of King Edmund's reign and the times in which he lived. But how was he remembered by the Anglo-Norman historians of the twelfth century? Did they continue the traditions of popular memory set by earlier chroniclers, or did they adapt his legacy to fit with their model of an idealized and romantic Anglo-Saxon past? As has been attempted above with the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the discussion will apply the same questions to the later twelfth-century sources, as the transmission of certain details may be observed and delineated. The examination shall endeavor not to propose anything particularly new here, but only to reexamine in a new context what has already been commented upon extensively by those far more qualified to do so.

Composed between the 1120s and 1140s, the Chronicle formerly attributed to the monk Florence is one of the earliest twelfth-century world histories undertaken by an English author.⁶² It is clear that John had MS 'D' of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the *Vita Dunstani*, and a few royal diplomas at his disposal when he compiled the annals for the reign of King Edmund. He was after all, writing at Worcester, and all of these sources can be traced back to there at some point. John also appears to have had the chronicle

⁶² R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk (eds.), *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*, translated by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk (3 Vols., Oxford, 1995), ii, xvii-xx (hereafter *John of Worcester*).

attributed to Symeon of Durham, but he seems to have used its record for ecclesiastical rather than political details. John picked and chose very carefully from his sources, and what he included is telling. For example, he clearly had 'D' in front of him when he wrote out the annal for 946, as he names the location of King Edmund's murder; however, he excludes the note that Edmund's current queen was Æthelflæd of Damerham. As has been noted by the most recent editors of the MSS, John of Worcester is also the earliest source that actually tells us the circumstances of Edmund's death:

"While the glorious Edmund, king of the English, was at the royal township called Pucklechurch in English, in seeking to rescue his steward from the hands of Leofa, a most wicked thief, lest he be killed, was himself killed by the same man on the feast of St Augustine, teacher of the English, on Tuesday, 26 May, in the fourth indiction, having completed five years and seven months of his reign. He was borne to Glastonbury, and buried by the abbot, St Dunstan."⁶³

We are told that the Leofa in question was "a wicked thief" (*pessimi cleptoris*) and that the king was fatally wounded in a scuffle while attempting to rescue one of his stewards (*dapiferum*).

One immediately wonders where this information may have come from. C.E. Wright nearly seventy years ago addressed the question of the transmission of the story of King Edmund's demise in the Latin histories of the twelfth-century. He concluded that the tale had become "an unsophisticated, vivid piece of secular saga" that was eventually absorbed completely into St Dunstan's hagiographical catalog.⁶⁴ However, Wright only seems to have treated William of Malmesbury's version of events as authoritative

⁶³ "Magnificus rex Anglorum Eadmundus, die festiuitatis sancti Augustini Anglorum doctoris, dum in regia uilla que Anglice Pucelecirce dicitur, suum dapiferum e minibus pessimi *cleptoris* Leoue ne occideretur uellet eripere, quinque annis septemque mensibus regni sui peractis, indictione .iiii., .vii. kalend.. Iunii, feria .iii., ab eodem interficitur, et Glæstoniam delatus, a beato Dunstano abate sepelitur." *John of Worcester*, 398-9.

⁶⁴ C.E. Wright, *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England* (Edinburgh, 1939), 82-3.

(discussed below), as the *Gesta Regum Anglorum* has the most detailed account. Wright leaves out any discussion of John of Worcester, the *Historia Regum*, or the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* account. He approached the story with a mind to what it had become later, rather than where it had come from, and what it may have resembled at an earlier stage. The reconstruction of an earlier tradition may seem a nigh impossible task, as it is entirely possible that a codification of written as well as oral tradition seems to have taken place. It is needless to point out that identifying the latter is difficult, even under the best circumstances. However, if later chroniclers in the twelfth-century were drawing on written sources that contained specific details regarding King Edmund, now lost, can speculation turn to questions of where they may have originated, or what they may have originally contained?

If John of Worcester relied on oral accounts alone for the specifics of King Edmund's murder, it would be a testament to the longevity of a local Worcester/Glastonbury-area tradition. If this was the case, one may wonder what led to its continuing transmission nearly two centuries later. If John were drawing his facts from a written source, how might this be determined? The answer to this question may lie in the pages of another twelfth-century history. As it contains the fullest account, the pertinent sections in William of Malmesbury's *Gesta Regum Anglorum* should be examined. The passage dealing with Edmund's death is rife with information contained in no other known account, and the language employed is of equal import. William mentions the name of the killer, Leof, identifies him as a thief (*latruncuclus*) who had, some six years previous, been banished for his robberies (*latrocinia*):

“A thief named Liofa, whom he [Edmund] had banished for his robberies, returned after six years, and on the festival of St Augustine, archbishop of

Canterbury, at Pucklechurch, unexpectedly took his seat among the royal guests. It was the day when the English were accustomed to hold a festival dinner in memory of him who preached the Gospel to them, and as it happened he was sitting next to the thegn whom the king himself had condescended to make his guest at dinner. The King alone noticed this, for all the rest were aflame with wine; and in sudden anger, carried away by fate, he leapt up from the table, seized him by the hair, and flung him to the ground. The man drew a dagger in stealth from its sheath, and as the king lay on him plunged it with all his force into his chest. The wound was fatal, and gave an opening for rumours about his death that spread all over England.”⁶⁵

At first glance, one will notice just how divergent this account is from John of Worcester’s. The details contained within William of Malmesbury’s story, and more tellingly the grandiloquent way in which he presents them, are indeed suggestive of his reliance on oral traditions, as Wright originally suggested. William even admits to having had to deal with different sources when he continues, stating, “the wound was fatal, *and gave an opening for rumours about his death that spread all over England.*” Wright italicized this portion in his commentary; this has been reproduced here as well, and for good reason. This statement is central to the suggestion that there is perhaps much more behind this account than meets the eye. There is no doubt that a royal murder would be sufficient impetus for rumor-mongering, but the fact that reports or stories recognized as rumor were known to William of Malmesbury so long after their original period of circulation suggests that they may have been more than just oral reports. It may be unlikely, but William could have been embroidering a written source.

⁶⁵ “Siquidem latrunculus quidam Leof, quem propter latrocinia eliminauerat, post sexennium regressus in sollemnitate sancti Augustini Cantuarie archiepiscopi inopinus apud Pukelecerce inter conuiuas regios assedit, quo scilicet die Angli festiue obsoniari solebant pro predicatoris sui memoria, et forte iuxta ducem recumbebat quem rex ipse partibus de cena dignatus fuerat. Id ab eo solo animaduersum, ceteris in uina spumantibus; itaque bili concitata, et, ut eum fata agebant, e mensa prosiliens, predoni in capillos inuolat, et ad terram elidit: ille latenter sicam de uagina eductam in pectus Regis superiacentis quanto potest conatu infigit; quo uulnere exanimatus, fabulae ianuam in omnem Angliam de interitu suo patefecit.” *Gesta Regum Anglorum I*, 230-3.

The situation is confused further by the fact that William is known to have met and shared sources with John of Worcester at some point.⁶⁶ Essentially this question can be boiled down to whether William and John had different sources for the circumstances of King Edmund's death, or whether William was simply attempting to tell a rousing good tale. The possibility of the existence of a written source cannot entirely be ruled out, as William's fuller account could be an accurate conveyance, and John's an abridged version of a shared source. It is also possible that they were presenting the same, shared oral traditions that were known to them, in their own fashion.

Sadly, the question of a lost written source dealing with King Edmund's demise must remain speculative, and it should be made clear that such a source's one-time existence is not a reliable assertion; the evidence is just not available to make such a claim tenable. However, if there was no such source, then the notion that these twelfth-century authors were gathering much of their information on King Edmund from purely oral traditions, stories that were nearly two centuries old must be entertained. If tales handed down through the conduits of local recollection surrounding King Edmund survived for that long, it would be worthwhile to consider King Edmund's influence on popular memory in the tenth century, and how his times and deeds were remembered.

So far some of the particularly unique pieces of information available for King Edmund's reign have been closely examined, and why and how they have been received have been considered. While the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* remains the most reliable source for narrative events, detailed examination shows that the information at the historian's disposal must be used with caution. The above argument speculates that events surrounding King Edmund's reign were recorded and documented by those

⁶⁶ Rodney Thompson, *William of Malmesbury* (Bury St. Edmund's, 1987), 75.

closely allied with him, the royal family, and certain reforming churchmen; one must take account of any possible biases they may have had. Of particular interest is the circumstantial link between certain details in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Archbishop Oda, Eadgifu and their common concerns. Perhaps most interesting is the link found between nearly all sources surrounding King Edmund's death, and the speculation and rumor that appears to have come immediately after. That William of Malmesbury writing some two centuries after the event seems to have had either written or anecdotal evidence surrounding the particulars of King Edmund's death is highly suggestive, though not certainly so, of a robust popular memory having survived from King Edmund's reign. This possibility alone furthers the suggestion at the heart of the present thesis, that when it comes to the period 939x46 there is much more than meets the eye.

This chapter has focused on a few very particular details found in some of the contemporary narrative sources, and there is much that has been left for further discussion. Thorough examination of the various recensions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* shows that much detailed information surrounding King Edmund and events during his reign were recorded in noticeably different contexts, and this has implications for how his reign has been interpreted by later historians. While it could be argued that this reflects a bias in the sources, it perhaps shows that King Edmund may very well have been remembered in certain ways on account of his activities in these regions and the associations fostered between them during and after his reign. In further chapters this notion will be expanded, and will help further the suggestion that King Edmund was remembered differently in diverse regions because his activities in and influence on these areas may have been varied as well. In the next chapter Edmund's early life will be

examined in the context of the milieu in which he was raised during the reign of King Athelstan, and will assist in placing the discussion of King Edmund's reign into perspective.



Chapter III:

Edmund *Ætheling*

Early Influences and Intimations

King Edward the Elder's death in 924 prevented him from watching his two youngest sons grow up beyond the age of about two or three, and Edmund and his younger brother Eadred spent the majority of their formative years under the auspices of their elder half-brother Athelstan. There is unfortunately no evidence to account for the activities of the youngest sons of King Edward between Edmund's birth and his appearance at Brunanburh in 937. Despite this lack of evidence, it is possible to describe something of the environment of the royal court and family life that surrounded the young Edmund up to the point where the evidence is firmer, and doing so will facilitate the establishment of a context for understanding the political currents developing during and after King Athelstan's reign. This chapter will be, then, partly a biographical sketch and partly a speculative exercise, and it must be remembered that many of its tentative conclusions can neither be proven nor disproved. Despite the associated risks, however, investigations into what Edmund's early life may have been like should prove of interest.

Edmund and Eadred lost their father when they were, respectively, three and two, and this must surely have affected their early lives. Much of what their father the king had meant to the developing English nation would have to have been told to them in song and tale, the two surely having witnessed first hand little, if any, activities of any significance. One wonders how this affected their early development in Anglo-Saxon aristocratic society. The question of a father figure for the two young lads should not entirely be written off as a modern pop-psychological anachronism. Edmund and Eadred were in an unenviable position in 925 in that they had few elder

male family members to speak for them. Their royal father and grandfather, while illustrious, were in their graves, as was their grandfather on their mother's side, Sigehelm.¹ Edmund and Eadred had elder half-brothers, Athelstan of course, and Edwin, but they were well ahead of the youths in the line of legitimate succession for the throne.

Edmund and Eadred's mother Eadgifu no doubt took on the primary responsibility of rearing her sons in their father's absence. Eadgifu's active role in their upbringing and the continuing closeness of Edmund and Eadred's relationship with their mother was central to both their respective reigns, as shall be seen.

But Eadgifu was surely not the only influence on her young sons. Edmund and Eadred were raised under the guardianship of their half-brother Athelstan, who was some twenty-four years their senior. It would be pleasantly romantic to assume that he had a direct hand in their early education and nurture, but any speculation as to the degree of his involvement remains difficult. If Edmund and Athelstan's later relationship is any indication, then it seems safe to assume that the familial bonds between them were strong and close from an early date.

However, it must be remembered that for some years after King Athelstan's accession the question of who would succeed him may not have been conclusively determined. Athelstan had only been crowned king on 4 September 925, nearly a month and a half after Edward the Elder's death. Edward's son and seemingly appointed heir, Ælfweard, died just sixteen days later.² Ælfweard's younger brother Edwin remained the most likely to succeed Athelstan at this time, should Athelstan have died. Edwin ran afoul of Athelstan in 933, and according to William of Malmesbury Edwin was banished and set to the sea on a boat sans oars, where he

¹ Sigehelm died at the Battle at 'Holm' in 903; see below, chapter six.

² ASC 'F', sub anno 924.

drowned.³ Whatever the circumstances, it appears more than likely that Edwin was involved in some sort of plot or scheme against Athelstan, despite the king's eventual remorse for his deed.⁴

Edwin was not the only member of the royal family of an age to be considered possibly throne worthy, as two sons of Æthelweard survived until 937, when they died at the Battle of Brunanburh. Ælfwine and Æthelwine, cousins to King Athelstan and to Edmund, likely enjoyed a close relationship with Athelstan, as they were said by William of Malmesbury to have been interred at Malmesbury with great honour.⁵ They are identified in several spurious diplomas as the sons of Æthelweard, King Edward the Elder's younger brother (S 434-6).⁶ Æthelweard is identified as *clitonis*, which could imply that his sons were considered æthelings, but they are not identified explicitly as such, and as the charters are later forgeries this notion should be rejected. And as Dumville has pointed out, there are problems in interpreting the term *cliton*.⁷ However, their presence points to the fact that there existed collateral lines of succession that could possibly have claimed legitimacy in a succession dispute, and since their relationship with King Athelstan before their deaths is unclear, it remains possible that they were considered ahead of Edmund in line for the throne.

Before the year 933 then, at the earliest, one can hardly expect that anyone in the kingdom would have regarded Edmund or Eadred's possibly becoming king with much seriousness. Until this date, from what can be determined, all issues dealing with the royal succession appeared to be in order, with Edwin as the likely successor.

³ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 224-9.

⁴ Athelstan built the church at Milton for Edwin's soul, and filled it with valuable relics, including those of Samson, archbishop of Dol, in the diocese of Tours. See William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 124.

⁵ See William of Malmesbury, *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 271.

⁶ S 434-6. See Kelly, *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, 218-27. The charters in question are dated internally to 937, but have been shown to have a likely date of 935.

⁷ See Dumville, "The ætheling: a study in Anglo-Saxon constitutional history", 6-11.

With Edwin out of the picture, the possibilities of other members of the royal family becoming king would have been apparent, While it remains impossible to tell, Athelstan may have, up to this point, paid little attention to his much younger half-brother, as his cousins were considerably older and more experienced. This is unlikely however, as Athelstan's relationship with Eadgifu was a decidedly close one, as will be made clear below. If there were any great changes in Edmund's upbringing, this could have been the point at which his early life would have pivoted. While it cannot be proven, Edmund's futures likely changed radically around his twelfth birthday.

Questions of the royal succession will best be left until chapter six, and now discussion will turn to Edmund's edification. It is common for historians of all periods to praise the learned and decry the ignorant. William of Malmesbury was not immune to this tendency, and his portrait of Edward the Elder's children by his third wife Eadgifu suggests that they may have been very well educated indeed. William of tells us that, not unlike their sisters, Edmund and Eadred

“...had been educated so that having first received a thorough immersion in book-learning, they could then proceed no longer like rustics but like philosophers to govern the commonwealth.”⁸

While one may suspect William of insinuating a formal education where no evidence may have actually existed for one, there is no outstanding reason to reject his assertion. This raises the question of who may have been directly responsible for Edmund and Eadred's education and where their grooming might have taken place.

⁸ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 200-1. Eadgifu's daughters appear to have been well educated as well: 'All the daughters had been brought up to devote most time in their childhood to letters, and thereafter to support of these arts they might pass their girlhood in chastity'. "Filiis suas ita instituerat ut litteris omnes in infantia maxime uacarent, mox etiam colum et acum exercere consuescerent, ut his artibus pudice impubem uirginitatem transigerent; filios ita ut primum eruditio plena litterarum in eos fonflueret et diende quasi philosophi ad gubernandam republiacam non iam rudes procederent."

The education of the English aristocracy, having been reinvigorated by King Alfred, remains a subject about which little is known. There may be value in examining the different ways that King Alfred's sons and daughters were educated. Asser states that Alfred's youngest son, Æthelweard, was taught alongside noble and lesser-born pupils in the local district, significantly "under the attentive care of teachers" and not tutored exclusively at the royal court, as were Edward and Ælfthryth.⁹ While Edmund was the eldest of his mother's sons, his proximity to the royal court in his early years is unclear, so just as Æthelweard was likely considered too young to succeed his father at the time, so Edmund might also have been deemed.

It was not at all uncommon for princes to be fostered or educated outside their own kingdoms. Athelstan himself had been raised by his aunt, Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians¹⁰, and it is probably no coincidence that Edmund's own son Edgar was also brought up outside of Wessex, under the guidance of one of Edmund's most trusted ealdormen, Æthelstan 'Half King' of East Anglia. One wonders if this may have been the case with Edmund as well. The sources are entirely silent as to where and by whom Edmund was educated and possibly fostered, but it might prove useful to briefly examine a few possible candidates.

In the secular realm one might reasonably restrict possibilities to ealdormen, and while such investigation is hampered by the sporadic charter attestations from King Athelstan's reign, some possibilities emerge. The ealdorman of northwest Mercia, one Uhtred, witnesses royal documents fairly regularly between 930x49. He was a wealthy landowner in Derbyshire, and he may have been active in reclaiming

⁹ Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (eds.), *Alfred The Great, Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources* (Harmondsworth, 1983), 90 (hereafter Asser's *Life of King Alfred*).

¹⁰ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 210-11.

land from the Danish inhabitants of that area from an early date.¹¹ No further biographical details for this man survive, but his son may well have retained royal favour in the mid 950s as a member of the royal household, as he is styled *pedissequus* in a charter of 955.¹²

The premier ealdormen for most of King Athelstan's reign were Ælfwold¹³ and Osferth¹⁴, both of whom witness royal diplomas from an early date. Osferth was identified as a kinsman when King Alfred granted him numerous estates in his will, and may be related to King Edward the Elder.¹⁵ While the details of his familial connection are uncertain, perhaps his kin relationship more than any other fact makes Osferth a likely candidate; Athelstan, after all, was fostered by his aunt, Æthelflæd, and Edgar's foster father Æthelstan 'Half King' was a distant relative. Osferth witnessed documents as an ealdorman between 905x34, almost always at the head of the secular witnesses.

Secular speculation aside, it is more likely that contemporary churchmen may have been involved in whatever education Edmund received, and one is on firmer ground when suggesting likely ecclesiastical teachers. Eadgifu was intrinsically involved in the endowment of female religious from the mid-930s on (discussed more fully in chapter six), and it would be foolish to assume that she would not have used her connections to high-ranking churchmen for the benefit of her sons. Here multiple

¹¹ S 397, dated 926, is a confirmation of 60 hides at Hope and Ashford, Derbyshire. The properties were previously purchased from the Danes; "Quapropter ego Æthelstanus Angulsaxonum rex non modica infulatus sublimatus dignitate superno instigatus desiderio fideli meo Uhtredo terram que nuncupatur at Hope et æt Æscforda. lx . manentium quam propria condignaque pecunia id est . xx . libras inter aurum et argento a paganis emerat iubente Eadweardo rege necnon et dux Æpelredo cum ceteris comitibus atque ministris in iuris hereditarii libertatem concedens donabo."

¹² S 569. See Hart, *ECNENM*, 362.

¹³ Ælfwald witnesses several of King Edward the Elder's diplomas from 903-4: S 367, 372-4 and 361. He witnesses most of Athelstan's charters; his final attestation is in 938 (S 440).

¹⁴ Osferth witnessed a single diploma as a thegn under Alfred (S 350); he witnessed several of Edward the Elder's diplomas as a *minister* (S 590, 592, 594), as *dux* (S 620, 623, 625, 627-9), and as *propinquus regis* (S 624). Osferth also witnesses most of Athelstan's charters until his death in 934.

¹⁵ Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, 177, n. 79.

possibilities emerge, as a large number of leading churchmen could have suited the bill. A case could be made for Wulfhelm, bishop of Wells (923-26) and later archbishop of Canterbury (926-42). His predecessor, Plegmund (890-923), had been the tutor of King Alfred, and Wulfhelm would likely have been a scholar of no small stature.¹⁶ Bishop Wulfhelm's connection to the diocese of Wells would have placed him in contact with the young Dunstan, and at court could have facilitated the introduction of the young Edmund and the up-and-coming monk with whom he had a close relationship later in his life.

A similar case can be made for another archbishop of Canterbury, Oda (942-58). As the Bishop of Ramsbury from 926, Oda was a highly trusted advisor of King Athelstan throughout his reign, and one of Edmund's early high-profile ecclesiastic promotions. Oda's close relationship with King Edmund is well attested, as they were later resolute collaborators in both statecraft and war. Oda's interest in ecclesiastical reform might have some relevance here, as he was clearly interested in wide-ranging educational contacts. He sent his nephew Oswald, later archbishop of York, to study at Fleury on the Continent, and he himself took some monastic instruction there.¹⁷

King Edmund's early promotion of the great majority of the individuals who would later be responsible for the heyday of the Benedictine reform should not be ignored. His mother Eadgifu's interests in monasticism and her strong influence on her son can only be one possible reason behind Edmund's predilection for elevating individuals who were of a mind to advance the monastic case. While the level of his own interest is subject to debate, his promotions do suggest that it was palpable. It is entirely possible that monastic tutors educated him at some point. It has been shown that the growth of scholarship within monastic centres was on a steady incline

¹⁶ Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, 92-3. See also Brooks, *Early History of Canterbury*, 152-4 and 213-14.

¹⁷ See Brooks, *Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 222. See also *Vita Sancti Odonis*, 19-20.

throughout the reigns of Edward the Elder and of Athelstan, and while Edmund probably was never a resident at such an institution, there is no reason to assume that he might not have visited monastic schools, or been visited by scholarly monks.¹⁸

While Dunstan and Æthelwold would have been far too young and inexperienced to teach Edmund directly in the 930s, it would not be a far cry to suggest that they may have, at some point, been instructed side by side. David Dumville has highlighted the growing educational milieu in England and its international connections before and during King Edmund's reign. His statement that Glastonbury was a "royal *Eigenkloster*" may be slightly adventurous, but it remains likely that Edmund could have had some personal affinity towards the location beyond his association with Dunstan.¹⁹ Dumville also makes important observations regarding Edmund's affinities towards monasticism and the broad based approach he appears to have taken in promoting it, by stressing Edmund's connections to Bath, Evesham and St Bertin on the continent.²⁰

In this context St Ælfheah 'the Bald' comes readily to mind as a possible nexus of contemporary education. Before being promoted to the bishopric of Winchester in 935, he appears to have been closely associated with the household of King Athelstan.²¹ Æthelwold followed Bishop Ælfheah to Winchester, joining him at the Old Minster, as did Dunstan.²² Dunstan was a kinsman of Bishop Ælfheah, and it was to him that Dunstan made his original monastic vows. If Dunstan or Æthelwold were involved with Edmund's education in any way, their respective *vitae* do not reflect any familiarity or early contact between the ætheling and the up-and-coming

¹⁸ See Michael Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature, 900-1066* (London, 1993), 12-24.

¹⁹ Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar*, 176. Glastonbury was, after all, where Edmund was buried.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 176.

²¹ See Barbara Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century", *Bishop Æthelwold, His Career and Influence*, Barbara Yorke (ed.), (Woodbridge, 1988), 65-88, at 66-8.

²² *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 108-9.

churchmen. Despite this, Archbishop Ælfheah remains perhaps the strongest possibility as Edmund's tutor, as King Athelstan himself is said to have been keenly attentive when it came to his skills as an educator, insisting that Æthelwold remain under his supervision.²³ One possible reason for this may have been King Athelstan's interest in retaining Ælfheah to continue Edmund and Eadred's education.

There may be a further line of inquiry that might associate Edmund closely with a school at Winchester, possibly headed by Ælfheah 'the Bald'. Edmund's own personal mass priest, Æthelnoth, was particularly closely associated with the New Minster. In a distinctly odd charter from 945 King Edmund granted "his priest" (*presbitero meo*) Æthelnoth an assortment of lands in Hampshire after they were purchased for some fifty gold *solidi*.²⁴ In a later charter datable to 946x53 the same Æthelnoth granted the lands to the New Minster with "all the freedom which King Edmund gave [him]".²⁵ It has been suggested that the grant may have been an attempt to establish a new religious house ancillary to the New Minster, as one of the properties (Basing) is identified as a "monastic dwelling" (*mansionem monasticam*).²⁶ If the document is reliable, King Edmund's grant to his priest in 945 may be suggestive of a certain level of education and interest in monasticism on Æthelnoth's part. One is immediately reminded of Bishop Æthelwold's acquisitions of land from King Edgar, which he used to endow his house at Ely.²⁷

The fact that King Edmund identifies Æthelnoth as his own personal priest may also be significant. There appears to have been a tradition of Anglo-Saxon

²³ See Michael Lapidge and Michael Winterbottom (eds.), Wulfstan of Winchester, *The Life of St Æthelwold* (Oxford, 1991), 14-15 (hereafter *The Life of St Æthelwold*).

²⁴ S 505. The charter is notable for being dated 30 March, and for the inclusion of two obscure biblical quotations.

²⁵ "...mid ealra freogdom þæt me cining Edmund giefan habban." S 1418. See A.J. Robertson (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Charters* (Cambridge, 1956), 54-5 and 310-11.

²⁶ S 505. See also Sean Miller, *The Charters of the New Minster, Winchester*, Anglo-Saxon Charters IX (Oxford, 2001), 70.

²⁷ *Liber Eliensis*, 120.

royalty being directly educated by their priests. In the preface to his version of Gregory's *Cura Pastoralis* King Alfred identified John the 'Old Saxon' as his "mæssepreost", and emphasized the fact that he had received untold assistance from his tutor in translating the work.²⁸ A later source echoes this sentiment.²⁹ John the 'Old Saxon' along with others such as Plegmund, Grimbald, and Asser surrounded King Alfred and were all instrumental players in his education in letters.³⁰ As John alone is identified as Alfred's priest, it remains impossible to say with certainty that a West Saxon king's priest was invariably his tutor, but the parallel remains.³¹

While whatever education Edmund may have received would likely have been given by English instructors, considerations of continental scholars should also be kept in mind. King Athelstan's court was one of the most international of the tenth-century, and its influence at home and abroad can seemingly not be underestimated. Athelstan's continental connections outshone those of all of his predecessors, and indeed many of his successors. Athelstan's broad reach is attested perhaps most vividly by his attraction of continental scholars to his court. Great learned men such as Peter (*Petrus*) and another author whose name remains unknown to us, composers respectively of the celebratory poems *Carta dirige gressus* and *Rex pius Ædelstan* could conceivably have been involved directly or indirectly in Edmund's education.³²

Irishmen such as Mael Brigte and Dub Innse visited Athelstan at various times, as did

²⁸ H. Sweet (ed.), *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*, EETS o.s. 45, 50 (London, 1871), 7.

²⁹ *Liber Eliensis*, 54.

³⁰ For an excellent discussion of the respective contributions of these and other individuals in the growth of learning in the late ninth and early tenth centuries see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Literature*, 1-48.

³¹ Locating Edmund at Winchester during his youth has much to recommend it, as there is evidence to suggest that his mother Eadgifu resided there. In the text of the poem *Carta Dirige Gressus*, in effect a letter recording the events of King Athelstan's expedition to Scotland in 927 and addressed "to the king's burh" (*ad regis palacium*), salutation is made to the queen and the prince (*Rege primum salutem ad reginam, clitonem*). The king's burh is likely Winchester, and while the prince is no doubt Edwin, the queen could very well refer to Eadgifu, as there is no evidence of King Athelstan ever having married. See Lapidge, *Anglo-Latin Literature*, 71-81.

³² For a detailed discussion of these two important poems, see Lapidge, *Anglo-Saxon Literature*, 71-81 and 81-5.

Israel the Grammarian, a scholar of “international standing”.³³ While there is no evidence to connect any of these individuals directly with Edmund (even remotely), it remains the case that Athelstan’s court included foreign intellectuals, each serving to enrich and enliven the educational standards of the day. If he was fostered close to the royal court, it seems reasonable to assume that Edmund had at least the opportunity to be very well educated.

It may also be worthwhile to consider the courtly culture current during King Athelstan’s reign, as the example of kingship perceptible to Edmund would have shaped his early interpretation of how an English king behaved and how he was regarded. The international flavour that surrounded King Athelstan’s court was not limited to men of letters and prominent churchmen. The West Saxon royal family was deeply entwined into the multinational scene that characterized Athelstan’s reign in a decidedly personal way. The marriages that Athelstan helped to broker between his own family members and continental royalty no doubt facilitated and expanded the far-reaching connections his court enjoyed. Edmund would have watched his own sister Eadgifu and no fewer than four of his half-sisters sent across the sea to be married to foreign nobility.³⁴ What effects the disappearance of nearly all of their female kinfolk of comparable age to lands far away had on Edmund and Eadred can only be imagined.

Edmund’s sisters were not all of them sent across the Channel to secure foreign alliances and maintain the friendliness of the conduits of trade and travel. At least one of Edmund’s sisters appears to have remained in England. The estate of

³³ Ibid, 18-20.

³⁴ Edmund’s sister Eadgifu was married to Louis of Aquitaine. Edmund’s half-sister of the same name was married to Charles the Simple; his other half-sisters, Edith, Eadhild, and Ælfgifu were married to Otto the Great, Hugh the Great, and Conrad of Burgundy, respectively. They were all children of Edward the Elder’s second wife, Ælflæd. This is not to mention, of course, Edmund’s other half sister Edith, who was married to Sigtrygg, King of York. She was Athelstan’s sister by Edward the Elder’s first wife, Ecgwynn.

some ten and seven hides (*mansae*) at Droxford, Hants, was granted in 939 to one Eadburh, who is identified as the king's sister.³⁵ She was most likely the daughter of Eadgifu who became a nun at Winchester.³⁶ This connection could reinforce the suggestion that Edmund and his siblings were close to the community at Winchester.

While young female members of the royal family were being shipped off to foreign lands in record numbers, also foreigners were flocking to England to associate themselves with the royal court. Athelstan played host to many high-profile foreign officials during his reign, and there exists a relatively rich record of their comings and goings. While the source is late, William of Malmesbury's effusive statement that, "kings of other nations, not without reason, thought themselves fortunate if they could buy his friendship either by family alliances or by gifts" could be accurate.³⁷ Early on in King Athelstan's reign Hugh the Great made his famous deputation to England in search of a peace-securing bride; he went home, happily it would seem, with Athelstan's sister Eadhild.

William of Malmesbury in his *Gesta Regum Anglorum* recounts Hugh the Great's visit with glee, and the gifts that Hugh reportedly gave the English king were manifold and magnificent.³⁸ Edmund would have been only about six at the time, but the seeming opulence, pomp and ceremony no doubt brought by the Frankish king could have been his earliest experience in the world of international diplomacy. It should not be overlooked that William alludes to the notion that some of the lavish gifts were passed down to Athelstan's descendants (minus those bequeathed to Malmesbury Abbey), so even if Edmund was not part of the actual ceremonies, he

³⁵ S 446.

³⁶ While her *vita* suggests that she was a nun from an early age, there is no reason to assume that Edmund and she were not familiar; indeed there is some evidence to suggest that they may have remained close. See Osbert of Clare, *Vita et translacione et miraculis beatae virginis Abburgae premissa* (ca. 1140). Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Laud. Misc. 114, ff. 85-'120'.

³⁷ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 217.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 219-20.

likely possessed a few souvenirs from the occasion.³⁹ Such physical objects may have remained palpable reminders of the international connections enjoyed by the English royal house, and could have served to illustrate the power and respect seemingly enjoyed by an English king.

King Athelstan, like his father before him, was close to the men of Brittany as well. There exists ample evidence to suggest strong links between Brittany and England during his reign, and the contacts between kingdoms were wide-ranging in their context. For instance, it would appear that there was a sizeable constituency of Breton religious men that became active in the English church throughout the early tenth century. Most of the evidence for this appears in sources towards the end of that century and the beginning of the eleventh. The large number of Breton saints' feast-days found in surviving English calendars and the proud claims of Breton relic possession amongst English churches and abbeys is telling, and while King Athelstan cannot be credited with fostering all of this sentiment, his reign stands out as a period of (in the words of one historian) "greater concentration of Breton influence in England than ever before."⁴⁰ Whether Athelstan's well known interest in Breton saints' relics came out of his contacts with churchmen from that region, or vice versa, is not a question we are presently concerned with.⁴¹ However Athelstan was keenly aware of activities in Brittany, and made no secret of his interests there. With the arrival of several high-profile refugees in 919 they became personal.

Brittany was ravaged in that year by a Viking army, and many of the regions inhabitants were forced to flee across the Channel. The Count of Poher, Mathedoi, was amongst them. Once safely in England, he and his household quickly befriended

³⁹ "With the rest of the gifts he endowed his successors on the throne..." Ibid, 221.

⁴⁰ Caroline Brett, "A Breton Pilgrim in England in the reign of King Æthelstan", *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*, Gillian Jondorf and D.N. Dumville (eds.), (Woodbridge, 1991), 43-70, at 47. For the evidence preceding the comment see 47, n.21-3.

⁴¹ But see *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 124 and 272.

the royal family, and Athelstan in particular. Their relationship became so close that Athelstan stood as godfather to Mathedoi's son. His name was Alan, after his grandfather on his mother's side, Alan the Great of Brittany, and he was to enjoy the support of the English throne for all of his days.⁴² It is entirely possible that Alan and Edmund grew up close to one another in King Athelstan's court, what with their similar ages and the Bretons' long stay in England. It would appear that Alan did not return permanently to Brittany until 936, and the number of years in-between suggests there would have been ample opportunity for contact.⁴³

Alan of Brittany was not the only foreign youth to enjoy a close relationship with Athelstan. The youngest son of Harold Fairhair, king of Norway may well have spent time at Athelstan's court. While there is no contemporary evidence for his actual presence in England, there is reason to believe that Athelstan fostered Hakon for a time.⁴⁴ Athelstan's relationship with Hakon and his father appears to have been friendly enough, if William of Malmesbury is to be trusted.⁴⁵ One can however wonder whether Edmund was on glowing terms with the Norwegian. At the risk of enlisting evidence from the Icelandic sagas, in the *Heimskringla* there is a curious aside noting Edmund's apparent dislike of Scandinavians. After King Eric of Norway, who also enjoyed friendly relations with King Athelstan, returned to Norway, he was apparently obliged to avoid King Edmund, as "[Edmund] liked not the Norsemen and King Eric had no friendship with him."⁴⁶ Whether this bit of legend is based on King Edmund's struggles against the Scandinavians that were threatening his borders during his reign (more likely), or it alludes to some long-

⁴² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 348.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 348.

⁴⁴ Herman Pálsson (trans.), *Egil's Saga* (Harmondsworth, 1976), 151.

⁴⁵ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 217.

⁴⁶ Erling Monsen (ed. and trans. with A.H. Smith), *Heimskringla, or the Lives of the Norse Kings by Snorre Sturlason*, (Cambridge, 1932), 80-1.

forgotten conflict between Edmund and Hakon, can only be wondered. Without making too much of this piece of evidence from saga, it may contain a grain of truth pointing towards Edmund's abandonment of policies maintained by King Athelstan towards Norwegians, and that upon Edmund's accession there were significant changes in the political climate.

Perhaps the most prominent continental guest that King Athelstan entertained was a relation of his. Charles the Simple, who had married Athelstan's sister Eadgifu, was in 922 abandoned by the majority of his followers in favour of Robert, the Count of Paris. The years that followed saw Robert's death and the struggle for control of Frankia by his son Hugh and Rudolf, duke of Burgundy, and the ensuing turbulence over Charles' predicament proved too much for his wife. Eadgifu fled for the safety of her home country with her young son Louis (later given the surname *d'Outremer*) in tow. All appeared lost for Louis' future as heir to the throne of France, so much so that it may have been for his sake that Athelstan entertained the marriage of his sister Eadhild to Hugh the Great in 926.⁴⁷

It was not until a decade later that circumstances allowed Louis to make his triumphant return to the land of his birth. According to the *Annals of Flodoard*, in 936 "Count Hugh [the Great] sent across the sea [to England] and summoned Louis, the son of Charles [the Simple], to take up the rule of the kingdom [of Francia]. King Athelstan, Louis's uncle, sent him to Francia along with bishops and others of his *fideles*...."⁴⁸ This was more than just a small retinue in support of Louis; the presence of bishops and "fideles" suggests a much more official group. King Athelstan's support of Louis d'Outremer and the obvious display involved in returning the son of the king from self-imposed exile indicates more than just political interest on

⁴⁷ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 345.

⁴⁸ *Annals of Flodoard*, 28.

Athelstan's part. The two men were after all cousins, and one cannot suppress the notion that a certain amount of family pride was at stake. Athelstan's involvement with Louis's affairs on the continent did not end in 936; three years later in 939 Athelstan sent a fleet of ships to the coast of Flanders to assist Louis against King Otto I of Germany, who was threatening Louis by pillaging throughout Lotharingia. The *Annals of Flodoard* notes that when they had made the crossing, the English plundered the coast without providing of any actual assistance.⁴⁹

While not entirely out of the ordinary (English fleets are notorious for being difficult to manage effectively), this episode does raise certain questions. Everything that is known of King Athelstan's relationship with Louis d'Outremer suggests that they were genuine allies; it seems highly odd that a fleet sent by Athelstan to support his own cousin, in what was considered a great difficulty at the time, would abandon its mission for piratical activity. Perhaps the annals are biased in some way. Unfortunately this failed exercise is an unexplained curiosity upon which one can only speculate, but it might possibly be associated with the circumstances surrounding the final years of Athelstan's reign (see below). Whether or not Edmund himself was in any way involved with the expedition to the Flemish coast cannot be determined, but his strong later support of Louis is suggestive of at least some tacit approval of, evidenced by his continuation of, Athelstan's policies towards Louis.⁵⁰

Such a lengthy digression into Edmund's possible early influences has hopefully shown that the formative period of his life was awash with powerful individuals and groups from far and wide. Whoever may have been educating and rearing Edmund in his early years, and whoever the *ætheling* was primarily associating with (be they foreign or domestic) it is possible that after 933 or so King

⁴⁹ Ibid, 31-2.

⁵⁰ See further below, chapter four.

Athelstan took a decidedly active role in grooming Edmund for his eventual succession. The year 934 as the latest probable date for Athelstan taking Edmund directly under his wing has much to recommend it. If Edmund were trusted and able enough to command militarily at Athelstan's side in 937 at the Battle of Brunanburh, surely the two brothers would have known each other's abilities intimately.

It should be stressed that by 937 when Edmund is said to have "struck life-long glory in strife round Brunanburh," his function appears to have been strictly a military one. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* alludes to Edmund's leading role in the campaign, and the language is suggestive of a high battlefield status. He is identified in multiple ways, as *ætheling*, as Athelstan's brother, and as King Edward the Elder's son. The language of the poem suggests a close relationship between King Athelstan and Edmund; in the opening paragraph, and when describing the victorious trip south, the poet stresses their togetherness. Such a high honour as leading the *fyrð* alongside the king would not have been given to an individual who was not considered adept, be him of royal kin or not. In short, it seems unreasonable to suggest that Athelstan would have brought a sixteen-year-old kinsman and possible successor with him into the fray unless he had proven his qualities well beforehand, and it is probable that by this date Edmund was a capable and proficient leader in his own right.

This is assuming Edmund was there in the first place, and it is of course conceivable that the author of the Brunanburh poem could have embellished Edmund's role in the battle. The late composition date lends credence to this suggestion, as does the fact that the Brunanburh poem appears to have been written over the annals from 937x40. This suggestion poses significant problems, as it would call for the scrapping of the long held statement of Edmund's presence. If the Brunanburh poem is seen as strictly propaganda, then any factual information is

inherently suspect; it could very well be that Edmund was never there. This however is highly unlikely, and it is more probable that Edmund was indeed present, whether he was actively engaged against the enemy or merely on the sidelines.⁵¹

If the tradition recounted by William of Malmesbury regarding the deaths of Ælfwine and Æthelwine were accurate, then their deaths at Brunanburh would have been significant. If either one of them were considered ahead of Edmund for the royal succession, Athelstan would have had to quickly rethink the issue of who would succeed him. If Edmund was considered ahead of the sons of Æthelfrith before this point, his status would have been bolstered by their loss, and whether or not he was next in line to the throne before 937, it is far more likely than not that after Brunanburh Edmund was recognized as the *de facto* successor. The strongest evidence for such an interpretation is Edmund's completely unchallenged accession. However, this is problematic, as it proves nothing about how things may have stood between Brunanburh and King Athelstan's death late in 939. A detailed investigation of these years may therefore shed light on what may have been transpiring.

King Athelstan's relations with his great men and what could be termed his administrative policies should be briefly addressed before approaching the evidence from late in his reign. Stenton commented on Athelstan's councils and his style of governance, stating that his royal meetings were:

...national assemblies, in which every local interest was represented, and they did much to break down the provincial separatism which was the chief obstacle to the political unification of England.⁵²

⁵¹ While it is possible that the composer of the Brunanburh poem embellished Edmund's participation, it seems improbable that such a level of hyperbole can be ascribed to the poet. Even if it was written in a context where it was necessary to stress Edmund's role in the battle, as Alex Woolf has suggested (in personal communication), it seems very improbable indeed that a contemporary audience, who would have undoubtedly known of the event through the conduits of living memory, would have accepted embellishment to the extent of including an individual who was not there in the account. For example, the words put into the mouths of Byrhtnoth's retainers at the Battle of Maldon may be ascribed to poetic licence, but nobody would doubt that the individuals named were not actually present.

⁵² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 352.

King Athelstan's many charters suggest that while his energy in traversing his kingdom was great, he still appears to have spent a great deal of time in Wessex. Indeed, Stenton's further comment that "For the last twelve years of his reign he had held together a composite state," suggests that King Athelstan was still encountering difficulties achieving the goal of uniting the administration of the various regions and peoples subject to his control.⁵³ Unfortunately, very little detail can be determined regarding how King Athelstan went about this process, as his relationships with his great men are difficult to determine. Some of this process will be discussed further regarding his legislation in chapter five. A fuller examination of King Athelstan's domestic policies are beyond the scope of the present thesis, however, some semblance of how these were implemented, and how they relate to King Edmund's style of kingship can be observed in the final years of King Athelstan's reign.

King Athelstan's Final Years

There is no concrete evidence that Edmund had been officially designated heir by the late 930s, either in the text of the poem found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 'A' (which was, most likely, composed some time after the battle occurred) or in any of King Athelstan's extant royal documents. Despite his likely prominent function in Athelstan's court during these years, there remains nothing to tie Edmund directly to any official duty or position. This is not so surprising, as it was not common practice for a royal heir to have any officially recognized administrative duty, at least not in the way modern historians might imagine; his job as an *ætheling* was to advise, watch and learn.

⁵³ Ibid, 356.

There is little evidence for the final years of King Athelstan's reign; one scholar sums up the situation when he states that, "These years after Brunanburh are the hardest for historians to pull together."⁵⁴ The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is silent for the years 938-9, and so one is forced to make conclusions from sources outside the more useful narratives. The series of royal charters that conveniently identified the place of issue associated with the scribe known as 'Athelstan A' comes to an end in the year 935, so any of the royal court's movements after this date cannot be traced.

In his history of the Church of Durham, Symeon of Durham alludes to a sort of sublime peace during the short period between Brunanburh and King Athelstan's death; "To his enemies everywhere he was fearsome, but he was peaceful towards his own people, and he afterwards ended his life in peace, leaving the rule of his empire to his brother Edmund."⁵⁵ As Symeon's sources for the intervening years appear to have been as scanty as our own, it could be suggested that his insinuation of an easy period was based on ignorance; it would be hazardous to take his rather formulaic statement at face value. However, there is nothing to lead one to believe that this was not the case; indeed, that the years 937-9 were relatively peaceful ones is entirely possible. Then, as now, the adage that 'no news is good news' probably applies.

While little may have been going wrong for the kingdom, surely it cannot therefore be suggested that nothing significant transpired. These years were no doubt busy ones for both Athelstan and Edmund, and while there exists no concrete evidence for their respective activities, some educated guesses as to what they may have been up to can be made. The fleet that was sent to Flanders in 939, mentioned above, is clear evidence of a certain confidence on the part of the English king. One

⁵⁴ Paul Hill, *The Age of Athelstan: Britain's Forgotten History* (Stroud, 2004), 166.

⁵⁵ David Rollason (ed. and trans.), *Symeon of Durham, Libellus de Exordio Atque Procursu Istius, Hoc Est Dunhelmensis Ecclesie* (Tract on the Origins and Progress of this the Church of Durham), (Oxford, 2000), 138-9. ("...hostibus circumquaque tremendus, suis erat pacificus, et in pace postmodum utiam terminavit, fratri Edmundo imperii monarchiam reliquens.")

would not expect a monarch anticipating or experiencing domestic jeopardy to expend valuable military resources on foreign political aid. Even if the fleet was very small (no figures are available), Athelstan must have felt secure enough at home to authorize the expedition. There is of course the possibility that the force was made up of mercenaries (if so this could explain the un-planned digression into piracy), but Flodoard clearly identifies the fleet as being English.⁵⁶

The narrative sources are thus of little help to the historian for these years. To press beyond the known facts of the last years of King Athelstan's reign will require the enlistment of the royal diplomas of the period. Approached with discretion and care, these documents present an oblique picture of Athelstan's relations with his principal aristocrats, his ealdormen, thegns and bishops. These and other documents shall be examined for what they might tell us about the English kingdom as well as Edmund's activities between Brunanburh and his accession to the throne in 939.

A case will now be made to suggest that by the year 939 Edmund *ætheling* was likely recognized as King Athelstan's successor, and it was at this time that he might have begun exercising some limited authority. This does not mean explicitly royal authority, for King Athelstan still lived, but it is possible that Edmund effectively acquired some influence over the affairs of the kingdom in the last years of Athelstan's life. The immediate threat of Brunanburh seemingly behind him and his health possibly in decline, Athelstan may have felt comfortable in relinquishing some aspects of his authority to his half-brother. While certain details may be elusive, the political situation amongst the king's court attendants in the years leading up to Athelstan's death can be examined in some detail.

⁵⁶ *Annals of Flodoard*, 31-2.

The extant charters from Athelstan's reign bearing usable witness lists are not equally dispersed, and half of them come from the last five years of his fourteen-year reign.⁵⁷ This could be accounted for by trends in charter production, or the relative survival of documents. In the years up to 935, anywhere between one and fifteen individuals witness charters as ealdorman (*dux*), and up to fifty-nine individuals witness as thegn (*minister*). These are very general numbers, and tell the historian little, if anything, about actual court attendance. Many witness lists have been truncated, abbreviated, and corrupted. Questions continue to be raised about the value of examining charter witness lists, and what can actually be determined about the number and relative status of the magnates and ecclesiastics who surrounded the king. For example, it remains to be convincingly demonstrated whether a name on a witness list denotes actual attendance at court, or merely signifies a reference to an individual who might have an interest in the circumstances warranting the issuing of the diploma.⁵⁸ This ambiguity is due in part to the still evolving understanding of royal diploma production.

Despite many disagreements surrounding difficulties of production and chance survival, one can still rely on several presuppositions. The first is that the order of names on a witness list usually denotes seniority or relative status. The second, and far stronger, is that the progress of individuals' careers can be charted by examining when they begin and cease to appear in the charter record. It is the recognition of these patterns that allows the historian to patch together shreds of information into a more coherent account. While patterns in the attestations of ealdormen and thegns are

⁵⁷ Many are spurious, forgeries, or otherwise unreliable. Only those shown to have reliable or seemingly complete witness lists including bishops, ealdormen and thegns have been included for purposes of discussion and comparison. These include some thirty five diplomas: S 379, S 396, S 400-1, S 403, S 405, S 407, S 411-13, S 416-18, S (add. Bark c.932), S 422-3, S 425-7, S 430-2, S 437-8, S 440-1, S 443, S 445-9, S 458, S 1417 and S 1604.

⁵⁸ See above, Chapter one, n. 36.

exceedingly difficult to recognize in the years up to 936 or so, the witness lists found in the charters of 937-9 exhibit more noticeably defined relationships. This could be attributed to changes in production, but it is not assured.

When one compares the charters from the last years of Athelstan's reign with those from just a few years previous, one is struck first by the drop in the overall number of attestations. This drop in numbers is noticeable amongst all classes of signatories, ecclesiastics, ealdormen and thegns. Between 930 and 936 the numbers of bishops and abbots who witnessed Athelstan's charters fluctuated around the high teens for the bishops, and between three and five for the abbots. Abbots only appear to witness Athelstan's charters for a few years, beginning in 931 and ending in 934, and the present investigation is less concerned with them, interesting as this group of signatories is.⁵⁹

Beginning in 937 a drastic reduction in the number of bishops can be observed, from a usual number between fifteen and nineteen to a very standard attendance of between seven and nine. The order of episcopal attestations in these charters maintains a rigorous hierarchy, with the archbishop of Canterbury invariably witnessing first, followed by the bishops of Winchester, London, Worcester, Ramsbury, Selsey, Wells, Rochester, and Crediton roughly in that order. This drop-off in court attendance by certain bishops is undoubtedly connected with the absence of Archbishop Wulfstan of York, who seems to have fallen out of King Athelstan's favour by 937, perhaps on account of the archbishop's support of the Hiberno-Norse coalition at Brunanburh.⁶⁰ Virtually all of the bishops who cease to witness around 935 are from unidentified bishoprics, most likely Northumbrian ones, and their disappearance dovetails nicely with that of Archbishop Wulfstan's. Interesting also is

⁵⁹ See S 379, S 403, S 405, S 407, S 412-13, S 416-19, S 422-3, S 425 and S 1604.

⁶⁰ See Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, 41 and 92.

the absence of the bishop of Lichfield. Bishop Ælfwine of Lichfield may have died c.935 and the bishopric left vacant until the attestation of his successor Wulfgar is observed c.941, but it is equally possible that between these years neither bishop was attending the West Saxon court. This could imply that during these years Athelstan was increasingly distanced from Mercian concerns. As Hart has pointed out, it is the case that between 937x40 no Mercian ealdormen witness King Athelstan's diplomas, and this could be seen as further evidence of this trend.⁶¹

A similar pattern in the attestations of the ealdormen can be observed around the same time frame. Between c.930x5 Athelstan's charters show the attestations of a number of northern earls, their noticeably Scandinavian sounding names helping them to stand out. Individuals such as Guthrum, Grim, Regenwold, and Gunner all witness multiple charters.⁶² Not unlike the northern churchmen, these earls tend to witness towards the bottom of the list of witnesses, after the ealdormen from Wessex and Mercia. As with the northern churchmen, these individuals with Scandinavian names do not appear to have witnessed any of King Athelstan's documents after the year 935.

While these similarities exist between the ecclesiastic witnesses and those of the ealdormen, there is also a noticeable difference. While Athelstan's southumbrian bishops all continue to witness after about 937, a number of his southern ealdormen do not. Some seven southern ealdormen regularly witness Athelstan's charters, in addition to the northern earls before this date. The attestations of Ælfwald, Osferth, Uhtred¹, Ælfstan, and Æthelstan 'Half King' are all common in these years. Some others do not appear to witness after 933x4, and one witnesses irregularly up to 937. This individual, a second Uhtred who will be designated Uhtred², is easily

⁶¹ Hart, *ECNENM*, 287.

⁶² See S 400-1, S 403, S 405, S 407, S 412-13, S 416-18, S 425 and S 434.

distinguished from the one mentioned above (Uhtred¹) by the location of his attestation further down the lists.⁶³ After 937 only three of these original ealdormen witness any documents, namely Ælfwald, Uhtred¹, and Æthelstan 'Half King'.

The reason for this reduction in numbers over a few years might be easily ascribed to individuals' deaths at the battle of Brunanburh; indeed the dates involved make such a conclusion very attractive. However, if one takes the diplomas at their face value it could be assumed that in the year or so after the battle of Brunanburh, King Athelstan appears to have governed his realm with only these three men styled with the formal position of ealdorman. Making such claims from such a small number of documents is tricky, but the regularity of attestations is striking. Once certain ealdormen disappear from the charter record they are gone forever, and some time may have elapsed before they were replaced.⁶⁴

The evidence for the year 938 is too scanty to allow much valuable comment, but for 939 there are far more charters, and one is therefore in a much better position to coax conclusions.⁶⁵ As noted above, the charters from about 937 on exhibit a greater degree of uniformity in their witness lists; this observation is aided by the reduced numbers of witnesses, both ecclesiastic and lay. By 939 however, the witness

⁶³ See S 407, 412-13 and S 416-18.

⁶⁴ If the battle of Brunanburh was as devastating to the English aristocracy may be imagined, King Athelstan may have had a drastically reduced pool of nobles from which to promote to high office. Ealdormen would have been on the front lines and in pitched battles, and even when victory was accomplished casualties were bound to be high. If it is accepted that a number of regional governors were suddenly removed violently from the picture, one may speculate somewhat as to how Athelstan could have handled the inevitable domestic administrative difficulties. Replacements would invariably be needed, but the evidence does not imply that they were immediate. Edmund is likely to have taken on at this point a degree of the administrative burden and, it could be argued, began to strongly influence the royal court, including the issue of its composition.

⁶⁵ One possible criticism of this approach is that it relies too strongly on the small number of charters from the last year of Athelstan's reign. That their marked difference from the charters of previous years could be ascribed to chance survival of the records of a single meeting of the king's *witan* cannot be denied. However, while the charters in question do exhibit certain uniformities in the attestations, they are by no means an identical set; that is, it is less likely that issues of diploma production account for what is observed. Furthermore, the dispersed nature of their survival in multiple cartularies rules out any systematic corruption or specific interest on the part of any single religious house with the charters as a group.

lists of Athelstan's charters appear to have crystallized. Perhaps the most significant distinction marking the diplomas of 939 is the appearance of Edmund himself, who witnesses a single authentic charter.⁶⁶ This document records a grant of a seventeen-hide (*mansæ*) estate at Droxford, Hants, to Edmund's and Athelstan's half-sister Eadburh.⁶⁷ Eadred also attests the charter, and both he and Edmund are identified individually as Athelstan's brothers (*frater regis*).

Their inclusion is significant, as if Edmund were by this time officially acknowledged as the king's successor, one might expect his attestation to reflect this status, with him being styled either *ætheling*, *cliton*, or *indolis clito*.⁶⁸ Even without direct evidence in the form of such an overt identification, it cannot be assumed that without it Edmund was not officially recognized as Athelstan's heir. One possible explanation for the presence of Edmund and Eadred's attestations would be of course the family connection to Eadburh, a position supported by the fact that both brothers are named, instead of just Edmund.⁶⁹

The pattern of attestations becomes so regular that in four of the five charters reliably datable to the year 939, with very few exceptions, the witness lists are

⁶⁶ Five charters bearing Athelstan's name but dated to the late seventh century, S 386-9, and S 433 bear Edmund's name as well, but they are all eleventh-century forgeries. See P. Chaplais, "The Authenticity of the Royal Anglo-Saxon Diplomas of Exeter", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 39 (1966), 1-34, at 5-9. S 455 also bears Edmund's name, but its authenticity is in doubt; Chaplais, in *ibid*, 5, believed it spurious, but possibly bearing a reliable witness list. H.P.R. Finberg believed it may have had an authentic basis, and more recently Edwards has considered it to be probably authentic. See H.P.R. Finberg, *The Early Charters of Wessex* (Leicester, 1964) (hereafter *ECW*), no. 437; and also H. Edwards, *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*, British Archaeological Reports, British ser. cxviii (Oxford, 1988), 207. In all of the charters Edmund is styled as the legitimate successor, *indolis clito*, and not as the king's brother.

⁶⁷ S 446.

⁶⁸ This is a minor issue, but a relevant one. There is still some question as to the meaning and use of these terms in royal documents. David Dumville's investigation of the terms from the eighth to the eleventh centuries, "The Ætheling: a Study in Anglo-Saxon Constitutional History," answers many questions but leaves just as many open-ended. Indeed it does appear that the uses of terms like these to identify individuals in official documents and narrative accounts did not adhere to any hard and fast rules, and were open to modification over time. While we see more tacit identification of æthelings in charters from the mid-tenth-century onwards, in 939 it does not appear to have been an institutionalised practice.

⁶⁹ For ease in understanding these changes, see Appendix II: King Athelstan's Charters 935x9.

virtually identical and interchangeable.⁷⁰ There are several possible reasons for this sudden regularization in the charter record. The four grants appear to be contemporary. The possibility of forgery can be ruled out, as there is no reason to doubt any of the charters' authenticity.⁷¹ There appears to be no reason to suspect that the witness lists are inauthentic, as the documents do not all belong to the same cartulary. Two are from the Old Minster, Winchester, (S 446, S 449); one is from Christ Church Canterbury (S 447); and one is from Abingdon (S 448). There is little pattern in the location of the properties granted, with lands in Kent, Berkshire, Wiltshire and Hertfordshire represented.

It is entirely possible, as suggested by Kelly with regard to two of them (S 447 and S 449), that the similar witness lists are evidence that the four charters were issued at (or from notes made at) a single meeting of the *witan*.⁷² They both exist as originals. On the other hand, Simon Keynes observes that this could also be a sign that the two charters were produced at the same time, in the Winchester scriptorium, the scribes utilizing the same witness list as exemplars.⁷³ Keynes also observes the similarities found between the four charters in question, pointing out however that while S 447 and S 449 were produced together, S 446 and 448 are more likely to have been produced independently.⁷⁴ If this were the case, the minor variations in the order of the bishops and slightly different list of the *ministri* amongst the charters might be

⁷⁰ Several charters from 939 are not reliable, but for reasons unrelated to the witnessing patterns found in the charters highlighted. Thus their exclusion is justified, and should not detract from the present study. S 455 is probably spurious, and while the witness list may have been copied from another, genuine, charter, its inclusion would be redundant; see H.P.R. Finberg, *Early Charters of Wessex* (Leicester, 1964), no. 437 (hereafter *ECW*). S 445, while authentic in its text, and therefore useful, has a truncated witness list. S 351 is a forgery for King Alfred dated 939. The witness list is composite, with elements from both the 9th and 10th centuries; see Finberg, *ECW*, no. 56, and Keynes, *Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 44, n.81.

⁷¹ For S 445 see Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 41-3; S 446, Finberg, *ECW*, no. 57; S 447, Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 16, 24, 43 and 45; S 448, Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon I*, 125-9; S 449, Finberg, *ECW*, no. 245.

⁷² Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon I*, 127.

⁷³ Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 24.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 33, n.76.

explained by irregular copying on the part of the cartularist. That the witness lists of these charters could possibly have originated from a single meeting cannot be ruled out, but it is worth stressing that all four charters having originated from a single meeting can neither be proven nor disproved.

There is also the possibility that the lists of witnesses reflect a subtle change in the methods of charter production. Richard Drögereit has shown that it is in precisely these years that one can begin to observe the telltale patterns of individual scribes being responsible for various charters. His identification of three distinct scribes who began working during Athelstan and Edmund's reigns suggests that charter production was centralized, and possibly undergoing a process of regularization.⁷⁵ Scribes such as his 'Athelstan C' had their own styles of charter composition and layout, and there are signs that the various scribes both influenced and learned from each other over time. While this is an undeniable trend, it surely cannot explain entirely the consolidation evident in the witness lists.⁷⁶

One possible reason for this regularity could be a significant change in the political alignment of the court and a re-organization of administrative districts. One can observe the disappearance of one ealdorman, and the promotion of two new ealdormen from the ranks of the *ministri* in his place. It is at this time that ealdorman Ælfwald ceases witnessing, and two thegns, namely Ælfhere and Wulfgar, begin witnessing as ealdormen. The most obvious conclusion might be that this Ælfwald either died or retired, and that his ealdordom was split to make two separate ealdordoms for Ælfhere and Wulfgar.⁷⁷ It is also possible that one of the ealdormen succeeded to Ælfwald's ealdordom, and the other was given his own separate district, since from 934 there had been only three regularly witnessing ealdormen; Ælfwald

⁷⁵ R. Drögereit, "Gab es eine angelsächsische Königskanzlei?", 335-436.

⁷⁶ See also Thompson, *Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas: A Palaeography*, 8-13 and 146-8.

⁷⁷ See Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, 188-9.

presumably of all of Wessex,⁷⁸ Æthelstan ‘Half King’ in East Anglia, and Uhtred² in Essex (probably).⁷⁹ It is difficult, but not wholly impossible, to determine the boundaries of Ælfwald’s ealdordom, as both Ælfhere’s and Wulfgar’s districts seem to have lain in Wessex.

These men are deserving of special attention. Ælfhere began witnessing royal diplomas as a thegn about a year before Wulfgar, in 927. He attests only one charter of that year⁸⁰ but begins witnessing semi-regularly after 929. While his attestations range between fourth and twenty-fifth on the lists, his name usually appears at either the sixth or seventh place, especially after 937.⁸¹ Almost nothing is known of Ælfhere, other than his existence. There are no records of any land grants to a minister of that name during King Athelstan’s reign, and there is no biographical information available. It would be nice to imagine that he was somehow related to ealdorman Ælfwald, as the first part of their names alliterate suggestively, but there is no direct evidence. It is entirely plausible however when Wulfgar’s career and promotion are considered alongside Ælfhere’s.

Wulfgar was a West Saxon thegn who witnessed at a relatively high position from his first attestation to his last, a relatively rare occurrence that suggests he was recognized as having a high status from his earliest appearances at court.⁸² He first appears in 928, and witnessed very regularly until 939 in nearly every extant charter

⁷⁸ Hart, *ECNENM*, 281.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 362.

⁸⁰ S 1417.

⁸¹ Ælfhere witnesses the following charters as *minister*: S 401, S 412, S 416, S 417, S 418a, S 425, S 407, S 427, S 430, S 438, S 432, S 411, S 441, S 440, S 443.

⁸² Wulfgar is most likely the same individual who joined King Athelstan in his patronage of St Cuthbert’s community. A *discifer* by that name was recorded in the *Liber Vitae* of Durham, a sign that he was in Athelstan’s personal retinue in and around 934, the year of Athelstan’s expedition to the north. See E. Barker, “Two lost documents of King Athelstan”, *Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (1977), 137-43.

from Athelstan's reign.⁸³ While he attested a few scattered charters as low as the ninth or tenth place, his usual spot is at second place, second only to one Odda.⁸⁴ In 931 and 933 Wulfgar was granted a total of 19 hides of land at Ham, and at Collingbourne, both in Wiltshire.⁸⁵ Like any proper Wessex magnate he seems to have had a close relationship with both the Old and the New Minsters at Winchester, as he bequeathed lands to both communities.⁸⁶ It is also probable that he was descended from a family with a tradition of high-ranking royal service. The same estate that Wulfgar possessed at Buttermere in Wiltshire was granted to one Wulfhere "princeps" by King Æthelred I of Wessex as early as 863.⁸⁷ It is indeed difficult not to identify this Wulfhere as the ealdorman of Wiltshire, and Wulfgar as his eventual inheritor.⁸⁸

Thus in 939 one can observe two individuals, each attesting relatively highly on the list of regularly witnessing thegns; Wulfgar attests at roughly the second place and Ælfhere at around seventh. Wulfgar was almost certainly the offspring or close kinsman of a former ealdorman, and Ælfhere also may very well have been. Upon Ealdorman Ælfwald's death they were appointed to his ealdordom.⁸⁹ It is therefore puzzling that as an ealdorman Ælfhere begins witnessing ahead of Wulfgar. Upon their joint promotion, Ælfhere suddenly begins witnessing in the first place, Wulfgar

⁸³ Wulfgar witnesses the following charters as *minister*: S 379, S 400-1, S 403, S 405, S 407, S 411-13, S 416-18a, S 422-3, S 425, S 427, S 430, S 432, S 438, and S 440-1.

⁸⁴ Odda's is a unique and interesting case, and will be dealt with in chapter four.

⁸⁵ S 416 and S 379, respectively. Wulfgar's will is extant, and from it one can tell that he also held lands in Berkshire, Hampshire, and a few more estates in Wiltshire. See Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. XXVI. Wulfgar's lands included estates at Inkpen and Denford in Berkshire, Æscmere in Hampshire, and Buttermere in Wiltshire.

⁸⁶ Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. XXVI. *Collingbourne* went to the New Minster, and *Ham* went to the Old Minster, both in reversion after Wulfgar's wife's death.

⁸⁷ S 336.

⁸⁸ Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, 275 and 307-10. In his will Wulfgar makes provision for the souls of Wulfric and Wulfhere, whom Robertson has identified as his father and grandfather. I see no problem with this identification. The same Wulfhere was disgraced sometime before 901, and Robertson attributes this to the fact that Wulfric was passed over for the promotion eventually given to his son.

⁸⁹ It is not known for certain whether Ælfwald retired or died.

at second, thus displacing the two remaining, apparently senior ealdormen, Æthelstan ‘Half King’ and Uhtred, to third and fourth respectively.⁹⁰

That is, it appears as though something other than seniority is reflected in the order of attestations, and this should be addressed.⁹¹ When the particular ealdormen whose attestations regularly appear at the first place during King Athelstan’s reign are examined, one finds that the only individuals who do so are West Saxons. During the course of the years 926-34 the two West Saxon ealdormen invariably witness first and second, sometimes switching places between each other. The first was the Ælfwald mentioned above, and the second was one Osferth, a very old and distinguished ealdorman who seems to have had a close relationship with King Edward the Elder.⁹² During this time Ealdorman Æthelstan ‘Half King’ regularly witnesses third amongst the ealdormen.

It is worth remembering that King Athelstan rarely ventured outside of Wessex in the course of his royal itinerary, and therefore may have been closer to his West Saxon thegns than his Mercian or East Anglian subjects.⁹³ Despite the fact that his charters hint at a far more national character than any previous reign, as well as a greater emphasis on regional attendance⁹⁴, only four known assemblies were held north of the Thames during his sovereignty.⁹⁵ That they all were held before 935 may be significant. This practice might explain why both men appear to have attested

⁹⁰ This pattern of attestations lasts through the end of King Athelstan’s reign, in S 448, S 449, S 447, and S 446, with the exception of S 455.

⁹¹ The fact that nothing is known of Ælfhere’s family or landholdings makes this exceptionally difficult, and one must be wary of making unfounded assumptions. If Ælfhere was indeed the son or possibly some other close kinsman of ealdorman Ælfwald, then it is possible that Ælfhere replaced him in the larger part of his ealdordom, more likely than not the eastern half of Wessex from Hampshire to Sussex. This would place Wulfgar in the Western parts of Wessex, an ealdordom consisting of Wiltshire at the least.

⁹² Hart, *ECNENM*, 355. Osferth was called “propinquus regis” in the text of a charter from 909 (S 378). Osferth is also referred to as “frater regis,” (S 1286) but this is believed to have been a mistake.

⁹³ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 350.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 354-6.

⁹⁵ King Athelstan held assemblies at Tamworth in 926 (ASC ‘D’, 926), Colchester in 931 (S 412), Nottingham in 934 (S 407), and Buckingham, also in 934 (S 426).

above the apparently more senior ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King'. This has implications for how relations between the king and his great men may have changed under King Edmund, as will be shown below and in chapter four.

From 935 only three ealdormen regularly witness King Athelstan's charters. While this kind of dispersal of power and small number of ealdormen would become common practice in the mid-eleventh century under Edward the Confessor, it was uncommon in the tenth, and seems out of character with the preceding years of Athelstan's reign. The event of Ælfwald's death or retirement was probably the impetus Athelstan needed to sub-divide Ælfwald's ealdordom and appoint two up-and-coming thegns to Ælfwald's former position. Whatever reasoning lay behind the promotion, it is still striking that an individual such as Ælfhere could seemingly be of a lower status or seniority than Wulfgar as a thegn, yet when they were both promoted some other criteria seems to have taken over (perhaps the location of his particular ealdordom, perhaps something else) that allowed him to be recognized as the 'senior' ealdorman in the kingdom.

It is entirely possible that these appointments and the division of the ealdordom of Wessex were made on the advice of the ætheling Edmund. By 939 King Athelstan's health as well as his authority may have been declining, and as Edmund was most likely the recognized heir, his opinion would have undoubtedly held great influence. That said, the promotion of individuals in Wessex could reflect King Athelstan's general policy of maintaining a closer relationship with his West Saxon subjects than his Mercian ones. Thus the restructuring of Wessex could equally reflect the last gasp of King Athelstan's administrative energies. As shall be made clear in the next chapter, King Edmund appears to have shifted his focus

northwards, and neither Ealdorman Ælfgar nor Wulfgar maintained their predominant position for long.

Further echoes of shifts in the witnessing patterns can be observed within the ranks of the *ministri* in the charters from 937x9. From about 937 on there is a similar consolidation and regularization in the witness lists of thegns as that seen in the attestations of ealdormen.⁹⁶ Firstly, one observes a drastic reduction in the overall number of diploma witnesses. Whereas in the years leading up to 937 there could be up to thirty witnesses, after that year there is a rough average of twenty-two. Secondly, this consolidated number of regular witnesses is almost always made up of the same men, and their attestations maintain a reliable order of prominence. Thirdly, at the risk of stating the obvious, this shift towards a seemingly regularized list of diploma witnesses amongst the *ministri* does not appear to be independent from the pattern found amongst the ealdormen. This is not to say explicitly that the changes in the witness lists were affected by the same rationale, but it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the marked changes in the two ranks of secular witnesses are connected in some way.

Again, causes related to charter production cannot entirely be ruled out. Even if what is observable merely reflects a change in production, such a change would suggest some new impetus to do so. When one examines closely the individuals who were witnessing regularly, one sees that they were a group who were decidedly close to Edmund after he became king. The thegns Odda, Ælfric, Eadmund, Wulfsige, Wihtgar, Æthelwold, Ælfred, Wulfgar, Wulfmær, Ælfsige and Ordheah all emerge as prominent men at court after the promotion of Ælfhere and Wulfgar in 939. A further

⁹⁶ This list includes the same four charters examined in detail above, with the following additions: S 411, S 432, S 437-8 and S 440-1. There is some dispute over the authenticity of S 440; S 443 is spurious; see Finberg, *ECW*, no. 438, and D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents* Vol. I, 2nd Ed. (London, 1979), 373 (hereafter *EHD*).

important point regarding these individuals is that their witnessing patterns respective of each other, that is, their internal hierarchy, does not appear to change significantly once Edmund was crowned king.⁹⁷ This correspondence is not necessarily suggestive of direct influence, but both aspects would appear to tally well with the hypothesis so far, and would tally well with the royal emphasis on hierarchy and allegiance observable during Edmund's reign.⁹⁸

The following suggestions will now be made. After Brunanburh Edmund was likely recognized unofficially as Athelstan's up-and-coming successor. In the years that followed there are hints at Edmund's growing authority, but there is nothing to prove that he directly influenced political decisions, as King Athelstan may have actively maintained many of his pro-West Saxon policies. Court magnates may have acknowledged that Edmund was going to be the next king, and that it would be to their advantage to ingratiate themselves unto him sooner rather than later. Although the available evidence is restrictive, the year 939 specifically appears as one in which the loyalties of the magnates towards the king may have been in the process of re-evaluation, and vice versa. The relative uniformity observable in charter witness lists could be tied simply to production, but even if this were the case, it would suggest that some significant reason lay behind such changes. This all points to a considerable shift in management and mindset occurring at the English court in and around the last years of King Athelstan's reign.

King Athelstan may have recognized the necessity of allowing his protégé to begin the process of assuming some of the responsibilities he would eventually have to wield alone; at the same time, Athelstan may have been attempting to set the stage for his successor by promoting continuity through a continuation of his own policies.

⁹⁷ See Appendices II-III.

⁹⁸ See below, chapter five.

It is possible, although not provable, that Edmund was beginning to associate more closely with the men he wanted at his councils, and to consider who was going to be promoted once he eventually became king. The charter evidence suggests the possibility that Athelstan's court was beginning the processes of allowing Edmund to wield authority, and enjoy an increasing degree of personal loyalty between himself and an ascendant group of ministers and ealdormen, likely many of the same individuals who were closely bound to him in the years immediately after Brunanburh. King Athelstan's health could have been in decline, and it is possible that both the royal family and the magnates of the kingdom were taking active steps to give Edmund a head start before Athelstan's death.

If Edmund did hold some provisional authority, the smooth transition upon Athelstan's death suggests that those whose opinion mattered were confident in his abilities, or at least comfortable with his leadership. That Edmund may have been actively promoting certain individuals at the expense of others before assuming the throne suggests further that he had a degree of confidence about him, and was eager to begin ruling in earnest. The next chapter shall continue the exploration of just what King Edmund may have had in mind for the English kingdom, and how the first years of his reign attest to shifts in royal policy, governance and which powerful groups were growing and decreasing in influence. The political scene in England in the early 940s is confused at best, and new light shall hopefully be shed on a very old problem.

Chapter IV:

Regional Politics and the Administration of England, 939-46

Edmund Assumes the Throne

The *Anglo Saxon Chronicle* 'A' entry for 939 states that "Here King Athelstan passed away on 27 October, 40 years all but a day after King Alfred passed away. And the ætheling Edmund succeeded to the kingdom; and he was then 18 years old."¹ As illustrated in the previous chapter, the available evidence suggests that Edmund likely held the loyalty of the majority of his great men well before King Athelstan died, and that before this date he may have wielded some independent authority. All the evidence at our disposal suggests that Edmund's succession to the throne was peaceful and accepted, at least initially, and this strengthens the notion that the great and the good of the kingdom supported him. This is noteworthy in and of itself. Edmund's taking the crown was notable as well for exactly what he became king of; Edmund was the first West Saxon king to ascend to the throne of all of England, and contemporaries could hardly have been oblivious to this fact.

Such sentiment can be observed in the charter styles found in the royal diplomas issued during King Edmund's first meetings of his *witan* early in 940.² He is styled grandly in the same formulae found in many of King Athelstan's charters. Edmund is styled *baselios*, a Graecism meaning "emperor", in several charters from that year, and the imperial pretension is palpable.³ This majestic style was popular with King Athelstan, and Edmund's continuance of this style early in his reign suggests that Edmund was not only content with the identification but that he ascribed

¹ "Her Æþelstan cyning forðferde on .vi. calends Nouembris ymbe .xl. wintra butan anre niht þæs þe Ælfred cyning forðferde, 7 Eadmund æþeling feng to rice 7 he wæs þa .xviii. wintra."

² For details see Appendix I, *King Edmund's Royal Charter Styles*.

³ See S 459-63 and S 480. There is some dispute over this term, and it is not entirely clear whether or not it was simply synonymous with "king".

to such a description with little trepidation. Alongside this Edmund also continued Athelstan's practice of associating his rule with the various peoples living round about England. Edmund's charters commonly employed a variation on the theme of "*Eadmundus, fauente superno numine basilius industrius Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu*".⁴ As Michael Davidson has suggested, it is difficult to dismiss such styles that explicitly show Edmund to be in command of an *imperium*,⁵ and it seems best to assume that whatever the actual political realities, Edmund may indeed have considered himself some sort of English emperor. One may be tempted not to blame him in the very early days of his reign.

Edmund's royal styles in his diplomas changed over the course of his reign, and patterns are observable over time and with changes in circumstance. After 940 the term *basileus* is rarely used⁶, and instead numerous variations of the title *rex Anglorum*, with such additions as "*curagulus multarum gentium*"⁷, and "*gubernator et rector*" appear⁸. The style "*gubernator et rector*" does not appear until charters from the year 944, and they continue through diplomas issued in 946. This change in style around 944 may be reliably associated with political events, and is possibly connected with Edmund's expulsion of the Viking kings from York in that year; this issue will be dealt with below.

The charter styles from the first year of Edmund's reign therefore suggest that for the first half of 940 the king was confident in his position at home, and was comfortable in projecting at least the image of imperial pretension. This in turn implies a good working relationship between the king and his great men, his secular

⁴ S 461.

⁵ Michael R. Davidson, *Submission and imperium in the early medieval Insular World*, Ph.D. (University of Edinburgh, 2002), 112-13. For a different reading, see also H.R. Loyn, "The Imperial Style of the Tenth Century Anglo-Saxon Kings", *History* 40 (1955), 111-15.

⁶ The only exception is S 485 from the year 942.

⁷ S 466.

⁸ S 493-4, S 497-501, S 504, S 506-7, S 510 and S 513.

and ecclesiastic delegates of authority. The relationships between the ealdormen and *ministri* who witness Edmund's charters are a tangled web, and before one can proceed the most prominent of these convergent family relationships must briefly be addressed. Several powerful families dominated King Edmund's court; some of them were interrelated themselves, and most shared some kin relationship with the royal family. In 940 the most prominent appears to have been the family of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King', who was appointed to the ealdordom of East Anglia c.932.⁹ Æthelstan was the son of Æthelfrith, ealdorman of southeast Mercia c.915x925; Æthelfrith had married King Alfred's great-niece, and was thus related to the royal family. Æthelstan 'Half King's two younger brothers, Æthelwold and Eadric, were both regular attendants at King Athelstan's court and continued to witness Edmund's documents regularly until their own promotion to their respective ealdordoms (see below).

The second major family group was that of Ealhhelm, ealdorman of Mercia from 940.¹⁰ As has been shown, numerous thegns who witness King Athelstan's and King Edmund's charters had close ties to this Mercian family. It is impossible to make any concrete assertions about Ealhhelm's family origins. However, his name is not a common one, and his clear Mercian origins help narrow the field. He could have been related to a Mercian *dux* who witnessed royal documents between 884x96, and there is the tantalizing possibility that either this individual or our Ealhhelm was involved in a land transfer with Æthelflæd Lady of the Mercians in the early tenth century, but this is highly uncertain.¹¹

⁹ For full biographical details see Hart, *The Danelaw*, 569-604.

¹⁰ The best analysis of Ealhhelm's family in the tenth-century remains Ann Williams' "*Princeps merciorum gentis: the family, career, and connections of Ælfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, 956-83*", *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982), 143-172.

¹¹ There is some dispute surrounding each of these possibilities; see Hart, *The Danelaw*, 570, and Sawyer, *Charters of Burton Abbey*, 1-2. We could be dealing with multiple individuals, as the date of

These are the major family groups that dominated not only Edmund's reign, but also remained influential in the reigns of his successors. They would have had expansively intertwined interests, and it is impossible to separately discuss one without mentioning the connections to the other. As with an iceberg, only the topmost part is visible; their various retainers, hangers-on, and outlying kin relations would have numbered in the high hundreds. It is most important that these two families' bases of power lay outside of Wessex, and the fact that they were increasingly relied upon by King Edmund strengthens the notion that he was reassessing his relationship with the regional administration of the areas under his control. This will be made clearer after the military events of the year 940 are addressed.

The Year 940: Anlaf Gothfrithsson and the Fog of War

In order to fully understand the broader political context of the year 940, the major recorded military actions must first be addressed. Once a framework of narrative events is established, the diploma evidence will be enlisted to help elucidate what was going on behind the scenes, so as to paint a fuller picture of the first year of King Edmund's reign. Some of these issues have been addressed in chapter two. Much recent work has been done to shed light on the sequence of events between 939x46, a chronology that has been for the large part confused. This is putting it mildly. Since 1918 the chronology set forth by Murray Beaven has been accepted with little criticism.¹² In the last decade this view has been challenged; first by Peter Sawyer in

the charter in question, S 224, is in doubt; Sawyer prefers the year 914, and Hart believes c.900 is more appropriate.

¹² Murray L.R. Beaven, "King Edmund I and the Danes of York" *English Historical Review* 33 (1918), 1-9.

1995¹³, whose reinterpretation was reinforced and augmented by Alex Woolf¹⁴ three years later. Clare Downham has most recently both challenged, and added to their work.¹⁵ For the present purpose it is not necessary to completely summarize their arguments here, but they do bear on the discussion.

Much dispute surrounds the approximate date for Anlaf Gothfrithsson's raid into English Mercia and the Five Boroughs. The entry for 943 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 'D' has long been interpreted as having post-dated the events of the year 940. If Beaven and Smyth are followed, the raid at Tamworth took place in 940; this is indicated by the presence of *her* in the *ASC*'s entry, which likely signifies the beginning of a new year in the annals. The generally accepted chronology, as modified by Sawyer and Woolf, is as follows:

- 937: Battle of Brunanburh.
- 939: Death of King Athelstan, Edmund assumes the throne.
- 940: Anlaf Gothfrithsson rules at York, raids Tamworth. After negotiations at Leicester, Anlaf assumes control north of Watling Street.
- 941: Anlaf Gothfrithsson is killed, men of York choose Óláfr Cuarán as king.
- 942: Edmund captures the Five Boroughs.
- 943: Edmund and Óláfr are reconciled. Óláfr is baptised. Edmund confirms and sponsors Ragnald.
- 944: Óláfr and Ragnald are expelled from York.
- 945: Óláfr returns to Dublin. Edmund conquers Strathclyde and grants it to King Malcolm of Scotland.
- 946: King Edmund is killed.

Clare Downham disputes this received view by suggesting that the *ASC* 'D's entry for 943 is essentially accurate in its received form. Her argument centres around the untrustworthy nature of Symeon of Durham's *Historia Regum Anglorum*, and the many contradictions between its account and the annals found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 'D'. Following Downham's interpretation, Anlaf Gothfrithsson

¹³ P. Sawyer, "The Last Scandinavian Kings of York", *Northern History* 31 (1995), 39-44.

¹⁴ Alex Woolf, "Erik Bloodaxe Revisited", *Northern History* 34 (1998), 189-93.

¹⁵ Clare Downham, "The Chronology of the Last Scandinavian Kings of York, AD 937-954", *Northern History* XL (2003), 25-51.

ruled at York until his death in 941, and it was Óláfr Cuarán who raided Tamworth in 942 or 943, perhaps as a response to King Edmund's retaking of the Five Borough's in 942. This difference is, in effect, the most significant divergence from the received version of events, and while it may appear a minor point, if it is accepted it forces one to fundamentally reconsider the first few years of King Edmund's reign.

There is much to recommend Downham's argument. She convincingly sheds doubt on the dating (not, however the events themselves) found in the *Historia Regum Anglorum*, and challenges many of Alex Woolf's assumptions about corroborating sources such as the *Life of St Cattoe*. She rightly points out that Archbishop Oda, who is said by Symeon to have brokered a treaty between King Edmund and Anlaf/Óláfr was still the Bishop of Ramsbury in 940. Downham also proposes an intriguing reason for Edmund's conquest of the Five Boroughs. She suggests that Óláfr Cuarán was strengthening informal alliances with the Northumbrian elite that likely resided in and held influence over the area of the Five Boroughs, and this could have been perceived by King Edmund as a threat to his authority in the area. This part of her interpretation is entirely convincing.

What Downham's assumptions fail to take account of, however, is the political situation developing between Wessex and Northumbria during the period. The suggestion that King Edmund seemingly tolerated Anlaf Gothfrithsson's presence at York requires an explanation, and one is not readily forthcoming. The relationship between the various leaders of York and Dublin in the years leading up to Edmund's accession to the throne is of the utmost importance. Anlaf Gothfrithsson had survived the battle of Brunanburh and would appear to have not let the defeat get him down. He harried Kildare in 938, and this is not so surprising, as it would have been in his best interests to recoup some of his former prestige, not to mention replenish his war

chest.¹⁶ As mentioned in chapter three, there is no evidence to suggest that the English were significantly troubled by external violence between 937 and 940. The Vikings appear to have taken out their aggression on the Irish, and it is from along the northern coasts that troubles are reported.

One of the few things that the chronicles appear to agree on is that in late 939 or 940 Anlaf Gothfrithsson travelled from Ireland to York, where he was accepted as the king of the Northumbrians.¹⁷ What is less than clear was his motivation for doing so. That is, was he bidden by the men of York to come rule over them, or did he sense the need to strike while the iron was hot immediately after the death of King Athelstan, and attain some sort of revenge on Edmund? If one assumes that it was a convenient combination of the two, as Smyth does, one would be led to believe that Gothfrithsson was a man who took things personally, who was happy to lead an independent Northumbria so long as he got to make things difficult for the English. It would be productive to consider whether his becoming king north of the Humber was a decision based on his political goals within the British Isles, or as the taking of a position that would equip him all the better to maintain his warrior lifestyle. From what is known of him, he appears to have had little interest in the actual politics of the period. He was a mercenary at heart, and while he never fought on the side of the West Saxons, this fact does not preclude the contention that he was particularly anti-West Saxon in his outlook.

The men of York, however, most definitely were, and they wanted a leader who would keep the southerners at bay. If Anlaf Gothfrithsson is seen not as a pirate turned political player, but as a marionette given the title of King of the Northumbrians and told to make war on the kingdoms' enemies, his apparent

¹⁶ Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (eds.), *The Annals of Ulster* (Dublin, 1983), 386-7, sub anno 938 (alias 939).

¹⁷ ASC 'D', sub anno 941 [940]; *Historia Regum Anglorum* (sub anno 941 [940]), II, 89.

personality appears to correlate a bit better with his actions. This interpretation would appear to tally well with what is known of the power of the Archbishops of York in the early tenth century, Wulfstan in particular. David Rollason has suggested, quite strongly, that the archbishops of York should be seen as the real power behind much of the politics of Northumbria during the Viking age.¹⁸ Indeed, whenever Anlaf is observed doing any negotiating, it is in the presence of the archbishop. Such an interpretation is to be preferred to the notion that Anlaf's own personal political motivations lay behind his move to York, as the relationship between Northumbria and the rest of England should be seen as being more heavily influenced by Archbishop Wulfstan during the period.

Accepting Downham's argument requires one to assume that once Anlaf Gothfrithsson was installed at York, he remained there and did not bother the English. This is difficult to accept, as Anlaf was not one to remain stationary; he was raiding in Kildare shortly after Brunanburh. If one allows that he was there owing to the permission of Archbishop Wulfstan, a picture emerges where Anlaf's talents were actively desired in York. The speed with which Anlaf was invited to York upon King Athelstan's death suggests further that both Wulfstan and Anlaf were keen to move quickly; there is nothing to recommend that they were biding their time. Wulfstan's avoidance of King Edmund's councils suggests that the archbishop's intentions towards Wessex were decidedly unfriendly. In short, given what is known of Anlaf Gothfrithsson, Archbishop Wulfstan and their shared interests, it is far more likely that they sought to invade Mercia at an earlier date than at a later one. In addition to these reasons, a close examination of the charter evidence will hopefully demonstrate that a date of 940 for Anlaf Gothfrithsson's incursion into Mercia fits better with the

¹⁸ David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100, Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge, 2003), 228-30.

context outlined above, and so discussion will proceed to an outline of Anlaf's activities during that year.

Symeon of Durham must be relied on for Anlaf's itinerary, as the *ASC* is reticent about the details. Seemingly without much ado upon reaching York, Anlaf "then struck southwards, and besieged Northampton."¹⁹ Having accomplished little there, Anlaf then marched his army northwest towards Tamworth, ravaging all around as he went. It was here, according to the *ASC* 'D', that Anlaf kidnapped Wulfrun, a rather important Mercian lady whose significance will become apparent further below. This done, he moved on to Leicester, where King Edmund encircled him within the city. Smyth has suggested that Anlaf's move into Danish Mercia was entirely unchallenged, and that it was only at Northampton that he eventually met any organized resistance.²⁰

Anlaf's actions however do not entirely support this interpretation. As mentioned above, while Downham successfully discounts the dating of the *Historia Regum Anglorum*, no convincing reason is given for doubting the itinerary described within the annal recounting the raid south, and the fact that Northampton is identified as the initial destination is significant.²¹ Northampton may have been Anlaf's primary goal from the outset, and this could be why Symeon of Durham mentions the city by name. Perhaps Anlaf met no resistance before Northampton because he had rushed south to take it.²² If Tamworth, and its illustrious female inhabitant were Anlaf's

¹⁹ "(rex Onlaf primo venit Eboracum), deinde ad austrum tendens, Hamtonam obsedit", sub anno 939, in Thomas Arnold (ed.), *Symeonis monachi opera omnia in Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores; or, Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland During the Middle Ages* (London, 1858-1911), 75, 93 (hereafter *Symeonis monachi opera*).

²⁰ Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin II*, 91.

²¹ Northampton is not mentioned in the account found in *ASC* 'D', but this provides no justification for distrusting its inclusion in *Historia Regum Anglorum*.

²² This would imply that the English had either little warning or virtually no forces capable of effective opposition near the area. This is difficult to accept, and it is much more likely the case that Anlaf rushed south in order to take a strategic strongpoint in a blitzkrieg attack, hoping his forces could repel

goal, surely it would have been easier to strike there first, instead of attempting to take Northampton, which was farther south and east. As he clearly took Northampton first, one is then led to conclude that Tamworth and Wulfrun's capture were either secondary considerations or objectives that only emerged as valuable upon Anlaf's being turned away farther south. His move northwest may have been a retreat of sorts, and it could be suggested that his taking of Wulfrun is a sign of the desperate straits he may have found himself in when King Edmund responded. It also suggests that Wulfrun's importance should be seen in a decidedly political context, and this implies a desire on the part of Anlaf and Archbishop Wulfstan to affect the relationship between Mercian interests and affairs between England and Northumbria. This has implications for interpreting King Edmund's policies towards Mercia throughout his reign, and underlines the importance of the region to overall royal control. Anlaf's incursion could be seen as an attempt to divide the men of Mercia against King Edmund.

The fact that Anlaf and Wulfstan were surrounded and besieged, seemingly with ease, by King Edmund in Leicester would suggest that their fortunes had been rather quickly reversed. It also supports the hypothesis that throughout the year 940 King Edmund was very conscious of his Mercian frontier, and was taking steps to reinforce it by promoting a large number of new ealdormen in Mercia, as will be made clearer below. Perhaps the initial English response to Anlaf's incursion was quicker and better organized than historians have given King Edmund credit for.

If this revised itinerary is accepted, the question as to why Anlaf wanted Northampton must be addressed. A survey of the sources suggests that Northampton was closely associated with armies and raiding, and it should come as no surprise to

the English when they eventually rallied. If correct, this would better explain his abrupt turnaround to Tamworth.

see a Viking make a beeline for such a strategic strongpoint.²³ If Anlaf had headed straight for Northampton with the sole aim of taking a tactical headquarters and found it fortified securely against him, he would naturally have set his sights on targets of opportunity that were behind him and more easily within his immediate grasp. Looking at things this way, Anlaf's expedition in 940 appears as an aborted attempt to take and/or spread division within Mercia for the benefit of the Archbishop of York, who accompanied Anlaf south.

What remains puzzling is Anlaf and Archbishop Wulfstan's decision to dither in Leicester. Assuming that they had with them a large enough force to feel confident enough to attempt to take Northampton, they may have felt secure enough to wait around for King Edmund to appear at their doorstep. If Anlaf had merely wanted to raid and capture, surely he would have beat a hasty retreat north. The sources lay their biases open at this point, but a general sense of what happened can be obtained by combining Symeon of Durham's account with that of the *ASC*. Once Edmund came on the scene, having besieged Anlaf within Leicester seemingly "without any difficult fighting"²⁴, there were negotiations between Archbishop Wulfstan and Oda, Bishop of Ramsbury.²⁵ Their meeting commenced only after Archbishop Wulfstan and Anlaf had snuck away from the borough under the cover of darkness.

The account in the *ASC* becomes very strange at this point, and states that "Here King Edmund besieged King Olaf and Archbishop Wulfstan in Leicester, and

²³ Nearly every reference to Northampton in Anglo-Saxon sources, so far as this author can tell, makes reference to either a *here* or a meeting of elders.

²⁴ *Symeonis monachi opera*, sub anno 939 [940], 94; "*Nec erat pugna difficilis*".

²⁵ If it is assumed that Symeon of Durham's chronology is correct while rejecting his dating, it still does not reconcile with Oda's archiepiscopal tenure. Wulfhelm was Archbishop of Canterbury until sometime in mid 941, and if Oda did accompany Edmund to Leicester in this year it was in his capacity as Bishop of Ramsbury. It is entirely possible that Simeon has made a mistake here. The events of 940 are misdated (for 939), and as Oda was best known for being an archbishop and not a bishop, Simeon might be excused for what is likely a backdating of Oda's promotion. On the other hand, Symeon could be correct about the position of archbishop and incorrect about the man, which could mean that it was actually Wulfhelm who accompanied Edmund north. In this case Oda is to be preferred, as his history as a leading figure in negotiations demonstrates, but either way it was a high-level adjudication.

he might have controlled them had they not escaped from the stronghold in the night.”²⁶ This passage is striking, being almost apologetic; it seems as if the composer of the annal is suggesting that Edmund was just barely out-foxed by a competitor who cheated at the last minute. One wonders why this would have been felt a necessary addition to the *Chronicle*. While it is quickly passed by, it expresses a bias on the part of the chronicler, a seeming desire to downplay what could very well have been a significant military blunder on King Edmund’s part. It is at least partly for this reason that it is preferable to date these events to 940 as opposed to 943. The English invasion of the Five Boroughs two years later makes better sense if it is assumed that it was a move designed to reverse an unfavourable settlement.

This settlement was brokered between Archbishop Wulfhelm of York and Bishop Oda of Ramsbury. Anlaf took effective control over the areas of Danish Mercia, and Edmund retained control of the areas to the south of Watling Street.²⁷ If this was as ignominious a defeat as it may at first appear, some level of crisis at King Edmund’s court might be expected. However, if the situation was dire, there is little to recommend that it lasted long. Some disruption is observed the charter evidence from 940 and the years that followed, but this does not suggest a significant crisis, and it is likely that the levels of both administrative cohesion and King Edmund’s authority within his kingdom remained relatively robust considering the circumstances. This can be observed through an examination of the charters issued in the years 940-1.

King Edmund’s Administrative Response to Anlaf

²⁶ “Her Eadmund cyning ymbsæt Anlaf cyning 7 Wulfstan arcebiscop on Legraceastre, 7 he hy gewyldan meahste, nære þæt hi on niht ut ne ætburston of þære byrig.” ASC ‘D’, sub anno 943.

²⁷ J.A. Giles (ed.), *Roger of Wendover’s Flowers of History* (London, 1849), 251 (hereafter *Roger of Wendover*).

For the first half of the year 940 all four ealdormen witness in the same order as that of 939; ecclesiastics maintain their strict hierarchy as well. This would tally well with the idea that Edmund's accession went relatively smoothly early in 940. The thegns however present a somewhat different story. In-between the final charter issued in King Athelstan's name and the first issued by Edmund a number of individuals appear to have been elevated in the ranks of the *ministri*. There are also several prominent disappearances. They will be introduced in the order of their prominence, beginning with those individuals who disappear permanently from the document record.

The most prominent thegn from King Athelstan's reign who does not continue to witness Edmund's documents was one Wulfmær. He was a regular witness of King Athelstan's royal diplomas between 930x9, and with a few exceptions seems to have occupied a place between eighth and twelfth.²⁸ He thus appears to have been a rather important individual, and one is thus curious as to why he ceases to witness once Edmund became king. He could have suffered eclipse. On the other hand, while it cannot be proven, Wulfmær could have been related to Wulfrun, the Mercian noblewoman who was taken captive by Anlaf Gothfrithsson when he took Tamworth in 940.²⁹ The alliteration in their names is suggestive of possible kinship, and if Wulfmær were killed in the fighting it would tally well with his disappearance from the charter record.

Another prominent thegn to disappear from the charter record in-between 939x40 is one Sigewulf. A regular witness of King Athelstan's charters beginning in 935, his attestation appears not far below Wulfmær's at an average place of fifteenth.³⁰ Sigewulf was granted a five-hide estate near Peterborough in 937, and the

²⁸ Wulfmær witnesses the following charters: S 379, S 405, S 407, S 411-2, S 416-7, S 421-5, S 427, S 430, S 440-1, S 443, S 446-7, S 449.

²⁹ ASC 'D', sub anno 943 [940]. See also, Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, 91.

³⁰ Sigewulf witnesses the following charters: S 411, S 430, S 432, S 437-8, S 440-1, S 446-7 and S 449.

location and date of the grant are telling of his probable position.³¹ The estate borders Ermine Street, as well as a Roman encampment, and the date of the grant corresponds nicely with a just-post-Brunanburh context.³² One assumption could be that Sigewulf was granted this estate to help establish a military presence along the main thoroughfare between London and York.³³

Sigewulf's estate wound up in the hands of *Ælfric cild*, the ealdorman of the Mercian east midlands in 983-5, and was purchased by Bishop *Æthelwold* of Winchester as part of his endowment project for Thorney Abbey.³⁴ Now, *Ælfric cild* may have been married to the daughter of Ealdorman Ealhhelm of Mercia from 940-51, who in the 930s witnessed King Athelstan's charters regularly as a *minister*.³⁵ When they witness documents together, Sigewulf invariably witnesses ahead of Ealhhelm, though not by more than a few places amongst the *ministri*. The possible transmission of the estate through inheritance and marriage may explain it eventually ending up in the hands of *Ælfric cild*, and it may be suggestive of a close relationship between Sigewulf and Ealhhelm in the late 930s.

Now, while the disappearance of Wulfmær and Sigewulf from the list of charter witnesses early in 940 may appear unrelated, the two men may have had close connections. Wulfmær witnessed at a very regular position in the low teens, as noted above. One particular charter likely bears his attestation at the very uncharacteristically high second place.³⁶ The charter in question is a grant to one *Ælfheah*, minister, and is datable to 937. *Ælfheah* was almost certainly the future ealdorman of Wessex (959-70), and the son of the future Ealdorman Ealhhelm.

³¹ S 437.

³² Hart, *ECEE*, 152-55.

³³ Sigewulf himself is not identifiable beyond his property, and it is highly unlikely that he is the same individual who minted coins for King Athelstan.

³⁴ Hart, *ECEE*, 153.

³⁵ See Williams, "Princeps merciorum gentis", 143-72, at 161.

³⁶ S 411.

Sigewulf also witnesses the charter. It has been noted that this charter and the document granting Sigewulf his estate at Water Newton share almost identical dispositive sections, immunity clauses, and sanctions, so it is entirely possible that this similarity is representative of the two charters having been produced from the same royal assembly.³⁷ This aside, it remains a possibility that these two individuals were connected in some way, what with their corresponding disappearances and possible connection to the family of Ealhhelm.

While it is entirely possible that Wulfmær and Sigewulf suffered simultaneous eclipse at court, this seems unlikely given their likely connection to the future Ealdorman Ealhhelm. It is far more likely that they were killed in the fighting early in 940. Sigewulf's property suggests that his position was a military one, and his possible connection to Wulfmær may have been martial as well.³⁸

So much for the prominent thegns who disappear from the charter record. A good deal more can be said about the individuals who appear to have been promoted significantly once Edmund became king. There appears to have been a recognizable pattern to King Edmund's early appointees, and he was associating himself more closely with several powerful groups. The families of Ealhhelm and Æthelstan 'Half King' were amongst these, and the growing influence of individuals associated with the midland shires can also be observed. The most prominent amongst these men is a certain Wullaf. Wullaf was a fairly regular witness during Athelstan's reign, his first appearance visible as early as 931.³⁹ His witnessing pattern for much of the 930s was

³⁷ Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon* I, 123-4.

³⁸ If this were the case, it could be evidence that would make King Edmund's charters from that same year more precisely datable. As neither of these men appear in any of Edmund's charters, it might be tentatively suggested that all of the extant charters from 940 post-date Anlaf Gothfrithsson's incursion into Danish Mercia.

³⁹ S 416.

one at the lower end of the margin; his attestation ranges between the tenth and forty-ninth place.⁴⁰

Two documents where Wullaf appears to witness abnormally high in the late 930s may shed some light on his possible affiliations. The recipient of the grant found in one of the charters, S 411, was Ælfheah, the same son of Ealhhelm as mentioned above.⁴¹ Wullaf witnesses this charter, from 937(?), in the fourth place. The other diploma was issued two years later, in 939.⁴² The second document records a grant to a certain Eadwulfu, a religious woman, of lands in Berkshire. It is to be counted amongst the group of grants to religious women associated with queen mother Eadgifu (see further, chapter six). Both of these charters, S 411 and S 448, are from the Abingdon archive, and this could suggest that Wullaf was either associated with the abbey or had local interests in the area.

The witness lists of these two charters are unique however, and there appears to be no other similarities present to suggest that they are the result of cartulary copying. The evidence of two abnormal attestations is certainly not conclusive of anything; but it is possibly suggestive of Wullaf's close connections to the family of Ealdorman Ealhhelm as well as his having links to royal interests in the context of religious benefactions. Wullaf may have been the same individual mentioned in a charter issued by Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians in 915x916, in which a certain Wullaf is recorded as having sold ten "manentes" at Farnborough to Eadric, her minister; if they were the same person this would make him an old man by the 940s, but not implausibly so.⁴³

⁴⁰ Wullaf witnesses the following charters as a *minister* during King Athelstan's reign: S 407, S 411, S 416-7, S 418a, S 425, S 427, S 430, S 432, S 438, S 441 and S 446-9.

⁴¹ Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon* I, 124.

⁴² S 448.

⁴³ Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon* I, 88 and 124.

Whatever Wullaf's connections to the royal household were during King Athelstan's reign, his fortunes appear much improved after Edmund became king. In the charters of 940 Wullaf is regularly observed witnessing in the fifth place, behind Wulfsige and ahead of Wihtgar (on them, see below). This is a noticeable jump in perceived status, and Wullaf appears to have been one of the early beneficiaries of King Edmund's favour.⁴⁴ Whether his promotion was related to the events of 940 or any Mercian connections is unknown.

The next major promotion visible in the list of ministers, while not necessarily a promotion per se, but possibly a conspicuous addition, is a certain Wulfric. This individual presents some problems, as identifying him positively is not entirely feasible. Two individuals by that name witness royal diplomas during Edmund's reign. The particular individual here appears to be Wulfric son of Cufa, and was to prove a close associate of King Edmund and especially his successors. Wulfric *Cufing's* activities before 940 are practically invisible. Two individuals by that name occasionally witnessed King Athelstan's charters between 931x4, in relatively low positions.⁴⁵ Either one of them could be the same individual, but there is no corroborating evidence to prove either identification. A single document from 939 almost certainly bears his attestation, as his name is at the ninth place, the approximate place he continues to witness at in the first years of Edmund's reign.⁴⁶ This indicates that his promotion technically predates King Athelstan's death, but he is introduced here for the sake of organization. Wulfric *Cufing* held lands throughout

⁴⁴ Wullaf is not a common name. There is the remote possibility that he was related somehow to a ninth-century *dux* who witnessed two of King Alfred's charters; S 345 and S 350.

⁴⁵ S 379, S 416-7, S 425 and S 427.

⁴⁶ S 448.

Berkshire, Hampshire and Sussex, and likely had a close relationship with Abingdon Abbey and the family of Ealdorman Ealhhelm.⁴⁷

Beginning in 940 Wulfric *Cufing* witnesses fairly regularly between seventh and ninth place. Wulfric *Cufing* may have had a close relationship with another individual by that name, the brother of St Dunstan. Their attestations in King Edmund's charters appear to dovetail later in his reign, and they may have been promoted together in the later 940s (see below). Both of these men also appear to have been allied closely with Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King', and this suggests that individuals connected to Ealdorman Ealhhelm's family were not the only early beneficiaries of King Edmund's favour.

Indeed Wulfric *Cufing*'s and Wullaf's promotion at this time may reflect a sign of King Edmund's drawing both of these powerful families closer to himself by ingratiating individuals connected to them whom King Athelstan apparently did not. Such moves on Edmund's part suggest that he may have been obliged to the respective power structures such alliances could engender, and possibly also that he was coming to rely on them increasingly. Generally these patterns of promotion during the transition from Athelstan's kingship to Edmund's suggest that immediately upon Edmund's accession there was a process of political realignment taking place, what with new men being promoted in the place of others.

Many individuals with close connections and associations with powerful family groups were already well established in his court, but the visible promotions appear to have been decidedly in favour of individuals connected to Mercian and East Anglian power interests, and their associations with individuals in central Wessex and Oxfordshire. It is perhaps not coincidental that it was these areas that would prove so

⁴⁷ Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon I*, clxxiv-clxxxv.

troublesome as the 940s progressed, and while it is merely conjectural, it could be a sign that King Edmund was anticipating further trouble from his northern frontier and attempting to strengthen it by drawing men from those areas closer to his immediate circle of advisors.

The Politics of 940-1

Now that some immediate aspects observable in the transition from King Athelstan's reign to Edmund's have been examined, one is in a better position to study the first complete year of his kingship. The charters of 940 show some distinct patterns and suggest several significant political moves. These developments are best illustrated, again, by looking closely at the witness lists.⁴⁸

In the year 940 there appear to have been at least two, and possibly three meetings of the *witan*. This is shown by the differences visible in the attestations of the charters issued during the year. The first meeting, where S 461 and S 463-4 were issued, is marked by the non-attendance of Queen mother Eadgifu, and indicated further by the fact that Æthelwold, Ealhhelm and Æthelmund all witness amongst the *ministri*. The fact that Wulfric *Cufing* does not witness two of these charters (S 463-4) is possible evidence that there could have been two meetings where the witness lists were nearly identical. This is merely hypothetical, as cartulary copying and the difference in scribal composition may account for these irregularities. The second meeting of 940 is clearly evident where the appearance of Queen mother Eadgifu is observed, who witnesses after King Edmund but before his brother Eadred, as well as the promotion of the thegns Æthelwold, Ealhhelm and Æthelmund to the position of

⁴⁸ See Appendix III, King Edmund's charters 940-1. They have been organized in accordance with Simon Keynes' *Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters*, with some amendments. Spurious charters and those with questionable or nonexistent witness lists have been excised, and some rearrangements as to probable chronology have been made.

ealdorman, shown in S 465, S 467⁴⁹, and S 470. The witness lists are not identical, and they show certain irregularities that suggest two separate meetings.

Attestation patterns may reflect associations between individuals. When these three charters are compared with S 469, arguably issued later in 940 (see below), a possible connection between Ealdorman Ælfhere of Wessex and the Wulfsige *minister* who regularly witnesses fourth can be observed. Ealdorman Ælfhere had been the highest-ranking ealdorman since his promotion in 939, and in the two charters from 940 that he does not attest, neither does Wulfsige. There are other irregularities with the witness lists, but the non-attendance of these two high profile individuals stands out, and is therefore suggestive of some sort of relationship between them. Wulfsige could conceivably have been a relative or a suffragan, or both, to Ealdorman Ælfhere. Wulfsige's rise in status under King Athelstan, as noted above in chapter three, correlates well with the promotion of Ealdorman Ælfhere in 939.⁵⁰

It is suggested that if Ealdorman Ælfhere and Wulfsige did not die together while on campaign, they both suffered eclipse around this time. In any event, the disappearance of two of King Edmund's high ranking retainers would have been significant indeed, especially when it is considered that their rise can be associated with the changes observable in the last years of King Athelstan's reign. Two more documents, S 468-9, indicate that a third meeting was possibly held toward the end of 940. Both diplomas are notable for the non-attendance of either Archbishop Wulfhelm of Canterbury or Bishop Theodred of London. One of these diplomas, S

⁴⁹ The witness list of S 467 has been abbreviated; the ealdormen are all accounted for, but the bishops and ministers are not fully represented.

⁵⁰ The name Wulfsige does appear after Ælfhere disappears from the charters completely, but all of the charters that bear this name after this date are either questionable or undoubtedly spurious. S 414-15 are both clear forgeries (Whitelock, *EHD*, 371); S 511 may be authentic, but not in its received form; S 514's authenticity is uncertain; only S 508 appears authentic, but it dates from 946, which could indicate that it is a different Wulfsige who witnesses the charter.

469, also bears the attestation of one Athelstan *dux*, an individual who appears to have been promoted late in 940 and who does not appear to have witnessed any of Edmund's documents before this as a *minister* (on this individual, see below).⁵¹

Even if there were two instead of three meetings of the *witan* in 940 where charters were issued, it appears as though King Edmund promoted three new ealdormen at the same meeting, definitely not at the first one, and most likely an assembly later in the year. This would have been an absolutely massive event. Edmund was effectively doubling the number of delegated ealdormen subject to his authority, likely at a single royal assembly. The opportunities for political manoeuvrings and the sheer level of intrigue would have been palpable to even the most casual observer. The three men whom Edmund promoted at this time came from some of the most powerful families in England. The individual who witnessed highest on the lists of the *ministri* was Æthelwold, Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King's' brother.⁵² Æthelwold first appears in charters around 927(?), and his witnessing patterns parallel most other high-ranking thegns from King Athelstan's reign. By 937 he was a regular witness at between the sixth and eighth place.⁵³

It has been suggested that he was promoted to the ealdorship of Kent and Sussex to replace the Ælfwald who disappeared in 939.⁵⁴ King Edmund may have granted him an estate at Chelworth in Crudwell, in Wiltshire, immediately before his appointment. Before he died, Æthelwold gave the estate to Glastonbury, and this may help associate him closely with Dunstan, who was made abbot there c.942.⁵⁵ The

⁵¹ Both charters are from the Wilton cartulary, and both have significant irregularities in the witness lists. The witness list of S 468 is cut off at the bottom of the MS (BL Harley 436, 71r-72v (s. xiv)), at f.72v; that of S 469 appears to have been abbreviated.

⁵² Hart, *The Danelaw*, 573.

⁵³ Æthelwold witnesses the following charters as a *minister*: S 407, S 411-12, S 416-17, S 418a, S 425, S 427, S 430, S 438, S 440-1, S 443, S 445-9, and S 1417 during Athelstan's reign; S 461 and S 463-4 during Edmund's reign.

⁵⁴ Hart, *The Danelaw*, 573, n. 11.

⁵⁵ Hart, *The Danelaw*, 573, n. 12. See also Finberg, *ECW*, 257.

assigned location of his ealdordom is not disputed,⁵⁶ but the evidence presented above seems to suggest that it was Ælfhere and Wulfgar that directly succeeded Ælfwald, and not Æthelwold. Thus we are presented with the likelihood that King Edmund was further subdividing Wessex by appointing additional ealdormen. It is of course equally possible that at this time Kent and Sussex were areas not administered by an ealdorman proper, but a general policy of subdivision fits better when taken alongside his other promotions.⁵⁷ It is also significant that instead of promoting a man from a Wessex family, Edmund saw fit at this time to put an East Anglian in control of Sussex.

The other two ealdormen that King Edmund appointed at this time were both assigned to districts in the midlands. Ealhhelm, who attests charters highest among the three, was placed in a Mercian district, corresponding roughly to the area of the Hwicce.⁵⁸ As mentioned above, little is known of his ancestry, but he was from an illustrious Mercian family line, and one that was connected by blood (the degree of their kinship is unknown) to the West Saxon royal house.⁵⁹ Ealhhelm's name is relatively uncommon, and it is fairly easy to assume that diploma attestations of that name are indeed his. As a thegn under King Athelstan Ealhhelm witnessed low and irregularly, appearing in charters anywhere between thirteenth and fortieth.⁶⁰ It was not until 937 that he began witnessing highly and regularly, at about the fourteenth

⁵⁶ Æthelwold's will is extant (S 1504), and is translated in F.E. Harmer (ed.), *Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries* (Cambridge, 1914), XX. (Hereafter *SEHD*). In his will Æthelwold distributes estates in Wiltshire (Wylve and *Oceburnan*), East Sussex (*Æcscedune*), Surrey (*Cegham*), West Berkshire (*Clere*), and West Sussex (*Wessinga tune*), as well as others that cannot be identified due to their very common names (*Bradán* and *Niwan tune*).

⁵⁷ See also Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, 196-7.

⁵⁸ See Nicholas Banton, *Ealdormen and Earls in England from the Reign of King Alfred to the Reign of Æthelred II*, D.Phil (Oxford, 1981), 110. See also, Williams, "Princeps merciorum gentis", 145, and Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, 196-7.

⁵⁹ Williams, "Princeps merciorum gentis", 145-6.

⁶⁰ Ealhhelm witnesses the following charters as *minister*: S 403, S 411, S 413, S 416-17, S 425, S 438, S 441 and S 446-9 during Athelstan's reign; S 461 and S 463-4 during Edmund's reign.

place. As mentioned above, it is highly likely that Ealhhelm enjoyed a close relationship with Edmund before he became king.⁶¹

Æthelmund, apparently the lower ranking of the three individuals promoted early in 940, appears to have attested royal diplomas in a similar pattern to that of Ealhhelm. Æthelmund first appears in royal diplomas in 928, and during the course of King Athelstan's reign he attested diplomas regularly. However Æthelmund's position in the lists varied greatly, anywhere from first place to twenty-sixth.⁶² No pattern or rough average can be determined until the year 939, when he begins attesting regularly at seventeenth place. He was most likely given control of the area of Northwest Mercia.⁶³

It is clear that the promotion of these three individuals, Ealdormen Æthelwold, Ealhhelm and Æthelmund, must be examined as a group. Furthermore, within that group it is helpful also to treat Ealhhelm and Æthelmund as another sub group, based on the Mercian districts to which they were assigned. It has been pointed out in chapter three that late in King Athelstan's reign the two newly promoted ealdormen in 939, Wulfgar and Ælfhere, began witnessing as *duces* higher on the lists than those individuals who were already established, and that it was most likely because they were administering districts in Wessex.

In the brief time in 940 before these men were promoted there was a distinct hierarchy amongst the existing ealdormen. Ealdorman Ælfhere of Wessex witnesses first followed by Wulfgar (also in Wessex), Æthelstan 'Half King' of East Anglia, and then Uhtred in Northwest Mercia. When the three thegns were promoted in mid-940,

⁶¹ One wonders if his role in the Battle of Brunanburh was a distinctly prominent one.

⁶² Æthelmund witnesses the following charters as minister: S 379, S 400, S 403, S 407, S 411-13, S 416-17, S 422, S 425, S 427, S 430, S 438, S 441 and S 446-9 during Athelstan's reign; S 461 and S 463-4 during Edmund's reign.

⁶³ Hart, *ECNEM*, 287-8. Banton believed that Æthelmund's ealdordom was coterminous with the diocese of Hereford (see *Ealdormen and Earls*, 110).

one immediately notices a change. Æthelwold, who had ranked highest of the three as a thegn, begins witnessing in third place, below Wulfgar and ahead of his elder brother, Æthelstan 'Half King'. Ealhhelm and Æthelmund however, begin witnessing in fifth and sixth place respectively, superseding only Uhtred.

Thus in the diplomas from later in the year 940 the ealdormen south of the Thames (now three of them) are seen witnessing at the fore, followed by that of East Anglia, and then the three men in charge of Mercian areas.⁶⁴ It is also most interesting to note that unlike the dual promotion of Ælfhere and Wulfgar in 939, where the individual who witnessed lower than the other as a thegn witnessed higher than the other as an ealdorman, the three promoted early in 940 retain their order of attestations in relation to one another. This may or may not have had more to do with their relative status to each other than to the location of their ealdordom, but it remains possible that issues of status had more to do with these promotions than seniority.

All of these promotions and the apparent shake-up of the status of these men leads to the conclusion that in 940 there was a greater deal of rearrangement going on in King Edmund's court than has been heretofore recognized. Such changes should not be exaggerated however, and the situation appears far from chaotic; but a large number of men were being promoted and also disappearing in a relatively short space of time. While the family of Æthelstan 'Half King' and their interests were coming to be relied upon heavily, again, Edmund was not promoting individuals from an exclusive group. Mercian concerns also appear to have taken a high priority around this time, what with the promotion of Ealhhelm and Æthelmund to their respective ealdordoms.

⁶⁴ S 465, S 470 and S 467.

The picture is complicated further when the promotion of yet another ealdorman is detected later in the year 940, one Æthelstan.⁶⁵ This has led to some confusion, as one is now forced to distinguish between two ealdormen witnessing by that name. In order to keep this confusion to a minimum, this second individual will be referred to as Æthelstan², so as to distinguish him from the ealdorman of East Anglia, Æthelstan ‘Half King.’⁶⁶ Æthelstan²’s identity as a thegn is difficult to map. A total of four individuals witness King Athelstan’s charters under that name as thegns, but as two of them witness only once⁶⁷, and another seemingly seven times⁶⁸, it is possible that the man in question is the one who witnesses King Athelstan’s charters more regularly.⁶⁹ Throughout the early and mid 930s he witnesses rather high, usually between second and fifth place.⁷⁰ If they are the same person, it is confusing that after 937 he begins witnessing lower, at around sixteenth place, and then completely disappears sometime in 938. Æthelstan² may have witnessed one of King Edmund’s diplomas as a *minister*, at the relatively low position of twenty-first place, early in 940, but again, this could be a different individual, possibly Æthelstan *Rota*.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Hart places Æthelstan²’s promotion after that of the other three ealdormen, and I tend to agree with his analysis; see *The Danelaw*, 582 n. 54. However it is equally possible that he was promoted at the same time, and that this is not adequately reflected in the witness lists. See also Banton, *Ealdormen and Earls*, 109.

⁶⁶ There remains some confusion regarding this identification. It could be the case that the Æthelstan promoted in 940 died in 949, as it is in this year the both he and Ealdorman Eadric cease attesting royal diplomas. It is also possible that he merely avoided court between 949 and 955, and accepting this interpretation would mean that Æthelstan² and Æthelstan *Rota* would be the same person, but this seems unlikely.

⁶⁷ S 416.

⁶⁸ S 400, S 403, S 405, S 412, S 416, S 418, and S 427.

⁶⁹ Nevertheless this is still conjecture. It could very well be that the Æthelstan who became an ealdorman in 940 never witnessed royal documents before this date.

⁷⁰ Æthelstan witnesses the following charters as *minister*: S 1417, S 400, S 401, S 403, S 405, S 412, S 413, S 1604, S 416, S 417, S 418a, S 418, S 423, S 425, S 407, S 427, S 430, S 438, S 432, S 411, S 441, S 440 during Athelstan’s reign; possibly S 464 during Edmund’s reign.

⁷¹ S 464. This is further complicated by the fact that the last six witnesses, Æthelstan included, seem to have been added by a different scribe; see N. Brooks and S.E. Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, no. 110 [Forthcoming], as well as chapter six, below.

While evidence for Æthelstan²'s position is not forthcoming from previous years, his status was sufficient to be promoted to the ealdordom of South East Mercia late in 940.⁷² When Æthelstan² begins witnessing as an ealdorman, his actual place fluctuates with the changing number of ealdormen witnessing charters from 940-1; but whatever the actual place he witnesses at, one thing remains constant: he always witnesses ahead of Ealhhelm, and beneath Æthelwold.⁷³ This is very intriguing, and it forces one to question why the sources do not reveal more about this apparently high ranking figure.

For at least the first years of his tenure, Æthelstan² was witnessing first among the Mercian ealdormen. This becomes doubly important when the fact that it would have been, at least partly, the area under his direct control that was being invaded by Anlaf Gothfrithsson in 940 is taken into consideration, and Æthelstan²'s promotion was likely a direct result of the incursions. It is therefore also tempting to see his witnessing highly as a direct result of this; why not have the man whose territory was being overrun, whose appointment may very well have been based on martial acumen, signing ahead of his other Mercian counterparts? If, as is likely, he had no official court position prior to this time, Æthelstan²'s promotion was a pragmatic appointment of a powerful local. If so, this would be significant, as it may suggest that King Edmund was not content to rely exclusively on the men whom he appears to have initially promoted, those who have recognizable positions at court. This furthers the suggestion that King Edmund was drawing powerful Mercians closer to himself.

Such promotions suggest a degree of adaptability on King Edmund's part, or to take the opposite view, the notion that Edmund was experiencing a need for greater

⁷² Hart, *ECNENM*, 299-300.

⁷³ Æthelstan² witnesses the following charters as *dux*: S 414, S 469, S 475, S 480, S 485, S 487-8, S 496, S 492-5, S 497, S 503, S 508 and S 1497 during Edmund's reign; S 517, S 519, S 521-2a, S 523, S 525-6, S 527-9, S 532-3, S 535-6, S 542, S 544 and S 547 during Eadred's reign.

local control through an increased number of delegates. It is striking that during such a massive reorganization of ealdordoms in the midlands as described above, the individual who begins witnessing Edmund's diplomas highest out of the four newly appointed ealdormen is the one man who seems not to have come from the king's more visible group of retainers, the company that witness diplomas on the most regular basis.⁷⁴ When examined in conjunction, King Edmund's promotions in 940 suggest a degree of balance between establishing Mercian and East Anglian interests within southern areas of the kingdom, and reinforcing the authority of powerful individuals in Mercia.

In his first year as king, Edmund appears to have been comfortably in power, promoting certain interests and distancing himself from others. His mother Eadgifu appears to have become a strong *visible* presence at his court, evidenced by the fact that she begins to witness royal diplomas.⁷⁵ This is significant, as such a perceptible inclusion of a member of the royal family in charters was undoubtedly designed to demonstrate her elevated influence on official policies. At this point it remains difficult to see just how far her persuasive muscle extended, but the number of land grants to female religious individuals, combined with what is known of her influence later, suggests that at this point it was firmly established.

The fact that King Edmund's younger brother Eadred begins witnessing charters is also significant, and suggests a high level of family cohesion being promoted through official documents. The families of Æthelstan 'Half King' and Ealhhelm appear to have been amongst the more prominent beneficiaries of Edmund's munificence, though not the only ones. Sometime in the middle of the year

⁷⁴ While these conditions could have influenced Æthelstan's initial promotion, it seems to have had little to do with his continued position in the witness lists after 941, as the death of another ealdorman and his replacement caused yet another shake up in the witness lists (see below).

⁷⁵ It will be argued in chapter six that Eadgifu was already influential behind the scenes, but this development is nevertheless significant.

940 the situation would appear to have drastically changed, and it became necessary for the king to effectively double the number of ealdormen. This appears to correspond with the disappearance from court of Ealdorman Ælfhere and his bloc of supporters at court, but one event is not necessarily causative of the other.

The promotion of four ealdormen in a single year is remarkable, and the interconnected nature of the personal and family relationships of those promoted leads one to assume that this was an ambitious move on King Edmund's part. This may have been a hasty action towards a tighter control of the local districts, and a possible sign that Edmund's authority was in need of some reinforcement in certain areas. On the other hand, it could reflect the beginnings of a revamped royal administrative strategy. The promotion of three new ealdormen in charge of Mercian districts, Ealhhelm, Æthelstan² and Æthelmund, coupled roughly with the disappearance of the senior ealdorman in Wessex, Ælfhere, suggests that the areas north of the Thames were of dramatically increasing concern to King Edmund during this year. It is likely that Anlaf Gothfrithsson's incursion lay behind much of the shake-up, but there are also significant hints at political motivations.

If, as is likely, Anlaf Gothfrithsson's incursion was designed to disrupt and influence relations between Wessex and Mercia, he may have succeeded to a limited degree. If this is accepted, the picture of King Edmund's court could be interpreted as reflecting part of the process of maintaining control over his dominions through the increased delegation of certain powerful groups in the localities. It should not be forgotten that one of an ealdorman's responsibilities was to raise and lead the local fyrd, and this lends assistance to the notion that military matters were becoming a high priority. Furthermore, the fact that King Edmund's mother and brother begin witnessing documents, significantly not at the first meeting of the witan, supports the

interpretation that projecting the royal family's solidarity was becoming a necessary part of royal assemblies. King Edmund's authority may have needed some enhancing in the face of domestic turmoil, and would have been doubly important considering the hasty nature of such measures. A newly enthroned king faced with military embarrassment would need all the help he could get, and what is observed appears to reflect such support being put into action. While it is not conclusive, the charter evidence from 940 does correlate well with the accepted chronology of events, and the disruption seen at King Edmund's court in 940 could likely reflect a reaction to Anlaf Gothfrithsson's invasion.

King Edmund and Northumbria: Round Two

The events and developments of 940 appear relatively straightforward when compared to the year 941, which is very sparsely documented. Only four genuine diplomas are datable to 941⁷⁶, and all but one of these have witness lists that are useful.⁷⁷ It is difficult to glean any valuable evidence from such a small number of charters, and nearly impossible to reconstruct the politics of that year. The witness lists of secular officials appear consistent with the diplomas from 941 and 943, and while it is far from certain, there does not appear to have been any significant changes in the order of attestations comparable to that observed in 940. From the three charters that bear reliable witness lists one can tell that there were likely at least two royal assemblies at which grants of land were made, as Archbishop Wulfhelm of Canterbury and Bishop Theodred of London attended one and not the other(s).⁷⁸

⁷⁶ S 474-6 and S 478. S 414-5, S 477 and S 511, all attributed to the year 941, are later forgeries.

⁷⁷ The witness list of S 474 has been abbreviated, and only bears the attestation of King Edmund and Archbishop Wulfhelm of Canterbury.

⁷⁸ This is based on a comparison of the witness lists of S 475-6. Wulfhelm and Theodred witness S 475, but not S 476. Both charters are also notable for the non-attendance of Bishop Burgric of Rochester.

The non-attendance of these two ecclesiastics at royal meetings may possibly be attributed to Archbishop Wulfhelm's waning health around this time. He died likely sometime in 941, and Bishop Oda of Ramsbury was promoted to the archbishopric of Canterbury.⁷⁹ Oda witnesses a single diploma as archbishop in 941, S 478.⁸⁰ This promotion likely occurred later in the year, as Oda appears to have gone to Rome to obtain his pallium in late 941 or early 942. He does not witness a number of charters from early in 942, and this would be explained easily if he were out of the country at the time. Oda was not one to overlook royal meetings, as his diligent presence in the charter record at other times shows. It is for this reason that two charters, possibly from early on in 942, which do not bear his attestation stand out. They are both grants to prominent churchmen, and it would be expected that if Oda were in the country he would have attested the grants.⁸¹ It is possible that Wulfhelm died later in 941 and that Oda delayed his trip to Rome so to avoid treacherous winter travel. Such a timetable would explain the one charter from 941 containing Oda's attestation, as well as the two documents from early in 942 that do not.⁸²

There is reason to believe that Oda's replacement of Wulfhelm at Canterbury coincided with a significant shift in policy at King Edmund's court. The degree of Oda's early influence on King Edmund is unclear, as it is possible that other mitigating factors were at work alongside the new archbishop. Still, the change in

⁷⁹ See Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 221-2 and 371 n.46, and M.A. O'Donovan, "An Interim Revision of Episcopal Dates for the Province of Canterbury", *Anglo-Saxon England* I (1972), 23-44, at 36-7.

⁸⁰ S 478 is a very unique document, and deserves special attention. As Kelly has noted (*Charters of Shaftesbury*, 47-53), it bears the longest proem of any of King Edmund's charters, and its context is noteworthy. It deals with complex ideological concepts such as hierarchy, the duties of rulers and the ruled, and especially law. As will be argued in chapter five, Archbishop Oda was especially involved in King Edmund's legislation, and the sentiments espoused in the charter's proem may be evidence of Oda's influence behind the scenes. One wonders if perhaps one of King Edmund's three legal proclamations was made at this particular royal meeting. The beneficiary, one Eadric, is identified as *vassallus*, and may have been the younger brother of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King'.

⁸¹ S 496 is a grant to the newly appointed bishop of Ramsbury, Ælfric. S 496 is a grant to Theodred, bishop of London. In both charters Theodred is the highest-ranking ecclesiastic.

⁸² S 478. See M.A. O'Donovan (ed.), *Charters of Sherborne*, Anglo-Saxon Charters III (Oxford, 1988), 32-3 and Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 50-3.

Canterbury was very significant indeed. Archbishop Wulfhelm had been close to King Athelstan for a very long time, and their relationship appears to have been both warm and mutually beneficial.⁸³ While Oda certainly had much in common with his predecessor, such as their mutual interest in the promulgation of legislation and the prominent role of churchmen in their enforcement (see chapter five), Oda comes off as a much more dynamic figure, particularly when it came to diplomacy. He had a fine track record under King Athelstan, and had been entrusted on several diplomatic missions to the continent. Perhaps his experience as a traveller and as a Benedictine gave him the skills and patience necessary to negotiate between and deal with kings.

While it may be embellished, the story of his preferring the household and education of a thegn named Æthelhelm to his own family suggests a certain independence of spirit that would make for an able administrator who got things done.⁸⁴ The equally apocryphal (and indeed, mythical) yet poignant story of his deeds on the field of battle at Brunanburh also tend to mark him out as an exceptionally vibrant figure.⁸⁵ King Edmund's promotion of this man inaugurated a remarkable partnership between king and archbishop, as shall be seen. It is likely that Archbishop Oda began immediately exercising a great deal of influence at King Edmund's court, and especially in the administration of the kingdom.

Beyond the highly significant change at Canterbury there is little concrete evidence for events in England for the year 941. A few things can be said however about events outside England. Firstly, Anlaf Gothfrithsson was killed while on campaign in Lothian. It seems he had sacked and burned Tynningame (near Dunbar) and plundered the church of St Baldred.⁸⁶ Smyth attributed this move to Anlaf's

⁸³ See Brooks, *Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 216-22.

⁸⁴ *Vita Sancti Odonis*, 5-7.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 13-15.

⁸⁶ *Symeonis monachi opera*, sub anno 941.

attempts at securing land and tribute for his retainers who had followed him to York.⁸⁷ If this is accepted it would appear that Anlaf was thoroughly confident in the stability of his recently dominated southern frontier; he surely would not have gone north unless he felt secure enough to do so.

This in turn would support Roger of Wendover's account of the treaty brokered between Edmund and Anlaf in 940. It is possible that part of the terms of the agreement required Anlaf to keep his raiding activity to the northern areas of Britain. Upon Anlaf's death, perhaps because of it, the men of York "ravaged the island of Lindisfarne and slew many".⁸⁸ This violent response against the bishopric of Durham and the community of St Cuthbert makes little sense unless they figured a connection between the bishopric and Anlaf's death, as Smyth suggested. If this was the case, does this mean some of the responsibility for Anlaf's killing can be placed on the bishopric of Durham? Durham had maintained a close alliance with the West Saxon royal house since King Athelstan had visited and patronized St Cuthbert's tomb in 934. Edmund was to visit Chester-le-Street later in 944-5, again bestowing great support (see below).

One possible explanation for these events may be found by examining the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*. As Luisella Simpson has demonstrated, parts of the *Historia* can be shown to have had acute political significance c.945 (for more, see below).⁸⁹ She argues convincingly that the author of sections of the *Historia* had significant West Saxon leanings, and that his work generally expresses a pro-West Saxon sentiment. In 945 the events of 940 must surely have been fresh in mind, and there are elements of Simpson's argument that can be extended to explain better the

⁸⁷ Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, 97-8.

⁸⁸ *Symeonis monachi opera*, sub anno 941.

⁸⁹ L. Simpson, "The King Alfred / St. Cuthbert Episode in the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*: Its Significance for mid-tenth-century English History," *St. Cuthbert, His Cult, and His Community to A.D. 1200* Bonner et al. (eds.), (Woodbridge, 1989), 397-411.

attack on Lindisfarne. According to the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, King Edward the Elder was especially close to the earls of Bamburgh.⁹⁰ This may be seen alongside the poems in the ASC for the battle of Brunanburh and the Redemption of the Five Boroughs. Both stress King Edmund's (and Athelstan's) identification as "Edward's son", and this no doubt would have been seen as significant in a Northumbrian context where Edward the Elder's name carried certain connotations.⁹¹

While Anlaf was accepted as king at York, such a move surely produced discontents. If there were a contingent (based at Lindisfarne?) affiliated with the earls of Bamburgh, who remained sympathetic to English interests in the north, it would have been in Anlaf's best interests to deal with them decisively.⁹² Perhaps this is why he chose to burn the vill of Tynninghame, which was a possession of St Cuthbert. Simeon of Durham says only that Anlaf was killed *after* his expedition in Bernicia, and his death could have occurred some time in the immediate aftermath, perhaps on his return to York.

It is possible that there existed a faction opposed to Scandinavian involvement (or, perhaps, pro English?) in Northumbrian affairs during the period, and that their activities may have included opposition to, and the possible assassination of, Anlaf Gothfrithsson. Anlaf was adept when it came to extricating himself from sticky situations, as he did at Brunanburh and at Leicester; his death while on a campaign against the men of Tynninghame seems a most unexciting way to go for such a seemingly able military commander. Simeon of Durham's language suggests that

⁹⁰ Ted Johnson South (ed.), *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: A History of Saint Cuthbert and a Record of His Patrimony* (Cambridge, 2002), 60-1. "...Ealdred son of Eadwulf [of Bamburgh], who was a favourite of king Edward, just as his father Eadwulf had been a favourite of King Alfred."

⁹¹ Simpson, *The King Alfred / St Cuthbert Episode*, 400. For more on this, see Alex Woolf's forthcoming volume in the *New History of Scotland* series, as well as below. For Edmund's treatment in the Brunanburh poem, see Hugh Magennis, *Images of Community in Old English Poetry*, Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 18 (Cambridge, 1996), 196-7

⁹² Lindisfarne had long been closely associated with Bamburgh, as Aidan placed the island community under the direct protection of the Bernician ruling house.

Anlaf may not have died on the battlefield, and the immediate aftermath would further imply foul play. Such treachery on the part of a faction opposed to Scandinavian overlordship may explain the vengeful rage vented by the men of York on Lindisfarne, as the victims may have been sympathetic to causes favoured by both St Cuthbert's community, the Bernician ruling house and English interest in the north. If this were the case, it would suggest that English interference in Northumbrian affairs was neither passive nor inactive after Anlaf's incursions, and that King Edmund may not have been as intimidated as he has been made out to be.

Whatever the reasons behind Anlaf Gothfrithsson's death, the men of York seem to have readily secured a replacement in the person of Óláfr Sigtryggsson. The career of this individual is coloured by his impressive Viking pedigree, as he was the son of the same Sihtric who ravaged the northern coasts for so many years during King Athelstan's reign. Óláfr had at some point been given the by-name *Cuarán*, one that appears to have stuck.⁹³ It must be initially asked just what Óláfr was doing in Northumbria in the first place. Smyth has suggested that he had been invited to York in 940 to assist Anlaf Gothfrithsson in his Mercian expedition.⁹⁴ This implies that Óláfr was most likely the de facto successor to Anlaf, as his rapid and apparently smooth acceptance at York after Anlaf's death shows.⁹⁵ Such an assertion would seem to stretch the evidence however, and it seems more likely that he was a lieutenant. His record on the battlefield as of this date is unknown, and he may have appeared to Archbishop Wulfstan and the men of York as the most suitable leader readily at hand. Such an interpretation could suggest that the men of York felt their position in jeopardy, and that the loss of Anlaf Gothfrithsson had been unanticipated.

⁹³ Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, 107. *Cuarán* is Irish for "slipper", or "sandal."

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 96-7.

⁹⁵ The seeming swiftness with which this transition occurred of course raised the possibility that Óláfr *Cuarán* was responsible for Anlaf Gothfrithsson's death, but there is no evidence to support this.

In any case it would seem that the men of York perhaps placed more faith in Óláfr Cuarán than he was due, as his inability to prevent or recoup the loss of the Five Boroughs in the following year shows.

With the political situation changing rapidly on his northern frontier, King Edmund had much to worry about. He had dealt with Anlaf Gothfrithsson before, and they appear to have come to an arrangement, however initially unbeneficial to Edmund. Óláfr Cuarán characterized a new face to the old thorn in the side of England's dealings with the Northumbrians, and Edmund may have accelerated plans to retake the Five Boroughs.

The “Redemption” of the Five Boroughs: King Edmund Strikes Back

In 942 King Edmund was no doubt aware of Anlaf Gothfrithsson's death and of Óláfr Cuarán's acceptance as the King of York, and the English made their move. The alliterative poem found in every extant version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* except for MSS 'E' and 'F' has been examined thoroughly before, and its historical and metrical worth widely praised.⁹⁶ It remains worthwhile to quote it in full here:

Here King Edmund, lord of the English,
guardian of kinsmen, beloved instigator of deeds,
conquered Mercia, bounded by The Dore,
Whitwell Gap and Humber river,
broad ocean-stream; five boroughs:
Leicester and Lincoln,
and Nottingham, likewise Stamford also
and Derby. Earlier the Danes were
under Northmen, subjected by force
in heathens' captive fetters,
for a long time until they were ransomed again,
to the honour of Edward's son,
protector of warriors, King Edmund.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ For a slightly old but still detailed and useful discussion see A. Mawer, “The Redemption of the Five Boroughs”, *English Historical Review* 38 (1923), 551-7.

⁹⁷ Michael Swanton (ed. and trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1996), 110.

(Her Eadmund cyning, Engla þeoden, mægþa mundbora, Myrce geeode, dyre dædfruma, swa Dor sceadæð Hwitanwyllesgeat 7 Himbran ea, Brada brymstream, burga fife, Ligerecaester 7 Lincolne 7 Snotingaham, swylce Stanford eac 7 Deoraby. Dæne wæron æror under Norðmannum nyde gebæded on hæðenra hæfteclommum lange þrage, oð hy alysde eft for his weordðscipe wigendra hleo afora Eadweardes, Eadmund(es) cyning.)⁹⁸

The poem emphasizes King Edmund's role as the primary instigator in the retaking of the Five Boroughs, as his name is twice invoked and his resemblance to his father Edward the Elder is made clear. It not only stresses the territorial gains made, but also the re-subjugation of the population of the Five Boroughs is given prominence. The poem makes a point of stressing the fact that the Five Boroughs were subjected to "heathens' captive fetters" (*hæðenra hæfteclommum*), and the connotations to a Christian audience are difficult to miss. It is possible that King Edmund had more than just political considerations on his mind when he made his move in taking the areas of Mercia controlled by the York Vikings.

It might then be solicited whether the English considered themselves more as having redeemed the Five Boroughs more from *foreign* control, or *pagan* control. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* expresses the West Saxon perspective, the official story; King Edmund had saved not only the Danelaw Danes' persons, but their souls as well. This is distinctly different from the poem celebrating Brunanburh, whose primary aim was to paint the sons of Edward as excellent warriors, defenders of territory and property. Here Edmund is not only valorous on the battlefield and the "redeemer" of England's self respect, but he is also, perhaps more importantly, the saviour of the residents of the Danelaw from the control of non-Christians.

The image of King Edmund portrayed in the Five Boroughs poem can be compared to the increasing promotion of King Edmund's image in the terms of sacral

⁹⁸ ASC 'D', sub anno 942.

kingship, as shall be seen in chapter five. Again, while it is impossible to prove, one gets the feeling that it was the archbishop of Canterbury who may have been spurring Edmund significantly at this time, as well as helping to promote his royal image. This is not to say that Edmund was prompted to action primarily on account of his desire to free the Danes from “heathen’s captive fetters”; but the fact that this aspect of the Five Boroughs campaign was so conspicuously highlighted suggests that it was a genuine concern for those involved, in hindsight at least. This could also be seen in conjunction with King Edmund’s growing association with Ealdorman Æthelstan ‘Half King’ in the years leading up to the campaign, whose family was known to have interests in promoting Christianity through monastic reform in later years.

One important question that remains is who was the aggressor at this time, King Edmund or Óláfr Cuarán. While Óláfr may have instigated hostilities in 942/3, it seems unlikely, at first glance, that he would have done so. If, as suggested above, Anlaf Gothfrithsson was comfortable with his southern frontier, Óláfr may have had a similar confidence. Perhaps Óláfr saw Edmund coming, perhaps not. The *Chronicle* poem does not explicitly say, but its stressing of Edmund’s action suggests that it was the English who took the initiative. The immediate comparison with Anlaf Gothfrithsson’s attack in 940 is perhaps poignant here, as upon Anlaf’s death in 941 Edmund might have also wished to waste no time in striking at the Five Boroughs while Óláfr Cuarán was still consolidating his authority in Northumbria.

However Edmund is identified as the “guardian of kinsmen” and the “protector of warriors”; such defensive language flies against him also being called the “beloved instigator of deeds”. The propagandistic and seemingly contradictory nature of the poem’s language highlights the difficulty in determining who struck first. Unless the Five Boroughs campaign was merely an occupation, King Edmund

was fighting someone in the area, and so it is possible that Óláfr provoked the English into action. The terms Óláfr Cuarán agreed to after Edmund's campaign suggest that he was caught off guard.

In 943 Edmund stood sponsor to Óláfr Cuarán's baptism. If the *Chronicle's* entry from that year is to be trusted, Óláfr "obtained King Edmund's friendship", and afterwards King Edmund "gave to [Óláfr] royally".⁹⁹ The language suggests that beforehand the two leaders were decidedly unfriendly, and further that King Edmund was the one giving gifts to Óláfr, and not the other way around. Óláfr was likely Edmund's guest in the south, and the probable location in Mercia or Wessex combined with Edmund's superior position as sponsor and gift-giver suggest that it was Óláfr who sued for peace. Óláfr had ruled Northumbria since the death of Anlaf Gothfrithsson in 941, and the fact that Edmund began dealing with him on terms in 943 suggests that the English king was at least comfortable with the situation that was expected after Óláfr was baptised. The fact that the men of York did not is telling, as they drove Óláfr out later in the year preferring the leadership of Ragnall Gothfrithsson, Óláfr's cousin.¹⁰⁰ From what can be determined, Edmund appears not to have batted an eye at this move, and he accepted Ragnall apparently in the same way he had Óláfr, with baptism and gifts.¹⁰¹

The Five Boroughs campaign was not Edmund's only military activity during this year, and the king was active against his Welsh enemies as well. King Edmund's relations with the Welsh up to this point are completely obscured. If there were significant skirmishes, they are not recorded. The Welsh kingdoms clearly had the

⁹⁹ ASC 'D', sub anno 943:"7 æfter þæm begeat Anlaf Eadmundes cynges freondscipe, 7 se cyning Eadmund onfeng þa Anlafe cyning æt fulwihte 7 he him cynelice gyfode."

¹⁰⁰ *Historia Regum Anglorum* (sub anno 943), I, 69.

¹⁰¹ *Historia Regum Anglorum* (sub anno 943), II, 89. Ragnall's 'submission', and his continued acceptance at York afterwards, suggests that other factors lay behind Óláfr's having been removed from power.

English on their minds, as the contemporary poem *Armes Prydein Vawr* makes clear. It is a 199-line poem that in prophetic style boasts of the future overthrow of Wessex by a united coalition of Welsh, Irish, Norse Vikings, Cornish, Bretons, and Manx. It has recently been convincingly dated to c.940, and the text is to be associated with a context just after Edmund's treaty with Anlaf Gothfrithsson.¹⁰² It is interesting to note the emphasis the poem places on the collection of taxes by the English king's agents, and one gets the impression that both King Athelstan and King Edmund had a reputation for harsh exactions. The entry in the *Annales Cambriae* for 943 states that Idwal, who was then the ruler of Gwynedd, was killed by "the Saxons".¹⁰³ This certainly refers to King Edmund, and while Smyth argues that this campaign was part of his retaking of the Five Boroughs, it is just as likely that Edmund made war against Idwal for any number of other reasons now unknown, perhaps tax evasion.¹⁰⁴ This notion is reinforced by William of Malmesbury's account of the great tribute levied by King Athelstan.¹⁰⁵

It was the king of Deheubarth, Hywel Dda, who took over Gwynedd from Idwal, which must have pleased King Edmund no end. Hywel Dda was an old friend of the English, having "submitted" to both King Edward the Elder in 918¹⁰⁶ and Athelstan in 927.¹⁰⁷ Hywel also witnessed one of Edmund's charters from 946, which suggests that he attended at least one royal assembly.¹⁰⁸ Hywel and Edmund may have been working in concert towards this end, and Hywel was to provide the English with further support when Edmund raided Strathclyde in 945. King Edmund's

¹⁰² See Andrew Breeze, "Armes Prydein, Hywel Dda, and the Reign of Edmund of Wessex", *Etudes Celtiques* 33 (1996), 209-22, at 215-7.

¹⁰³ J. Ingram (trans.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1912) Sub-anno.

¹⁰⁴ Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, 113.

¹⁰⁵ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 214-17.

¹⁰⁶ ASC 'A', sub anno 922 (re: 918).

¹⁰⁷ ASC 'D', sub anno 926 (re: 927).

¹⁰⁸ S 1497.

dealings with the Welsh kingdoms suggest that political opportunity lay behind his decision to move against Idwal when he did in 943, not unlike his taking advantage of the chaotic situation in York a year later. It suggests that part of King Edmund's strategy was the reinforcement of the power of friendly client kings in the lands bordering his own, as opposed to King Athelstan's policies of enforcing the submission of client kings. While it is likely that this should be seen alongside Edmund's increasing reliance on and association with power interests in Mercia, it could also be a symptom of the imperial pretensions during his reign.

The significant political and military events of 942/3 are thus difficult, but not impossible to flesh out from the confused narrative sources. What these sources do not tell us is what was going on in Wessex during this tumultuous period. Again, when King Edmund's charters are examined, a domestic political scene begins to emerge from the shadows. It is important to remember that the political and diplomatic situation evolving in the north illustrated above was taking place alongside the domestic political actions and reactions occurring in Wessex and, increasingly, Mercia.

The Politics of 942-3

Administrative business and the granting of lands at royal meetings did not cease during 942. The year 942 is much better documented than 941, and nearly as well documented as 940. Nine charters are extant from 942, and it is the very rare case that all of them appear to be authentic.¹⁰⁹ It would be helpful if the diplomas from this year could be more precisely datable, that is, before or after the Five Boroughs campaign, but this is impossible. The documents that have survived from this year

¹⁰⁹ S 479-85, S 496, S 1606.

exhibit a distinct pattern when it comes to who was receiving property. King Edmund was continuing to endow nuns, with charters granting lands to religious women such as Sæthryth¹¹⁰, and also to Wynflæd, the mother of King Edmund's first wife Ælfifu.¹¹¹ Bishop Theodred of London also received land at this time,¹¹² as did Bishop Ælfric of Ramsbury.¹¹³ The massive grant of one hundred hides to Bishop Ælfric could be seen as a sign of Archbishop Oda's growing influence, as Ramsbury was his former see.

Overwhelmingly however in 942 two significant trends can be observed, first the enrichment of the family of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King', and secondly the enrichment of one Wulfsige 'the Black'. Æthelstan 'Half King' received ten hides at Ærmundeslea¹¹⁴, Berkshire, and twenty hides at Mells, in Somerset.¹¹⁵ It was at roughly this time that King Edmund also promoted Eadric, another younger brother of Æthelstan 'Half King', to the position of ealdorman. An Eadric *minister* witnesses King Athelstan's charters regularly after 930, and his pattern of attestations is sufficiently ordered to suggest an individual of high rank.¹¹⁶ It is possible that he had a high status before he appears as a regular witness, as in 925 one Eadric received seven hides of land at Whittington, near Lichfield, in Staffordshire.¹¹⁷ During the early 930s Eadric witnessed between fifth and fifteenth, but by the last years of King Athelstan's reign he regularly attested at the thirteenth place, just above Ealhhelm.

¹¹⁰ S 482.

¹¹¹ S 485. See also chapter six, below.

¹¹² S 483.

¹¹³ S 496. This document could be either from 942 or 944 (see Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon I*, 151-2), but from analysis of the witness list, it is far more likely that 942 is correct, as Wulfgar *dux* witnesses in the first place amongst the ealdormen.

¹¹⁴ S 480.

¹¹⁵ S 481.

¹¹⁶ Two individuals named Eadric attest King Athelstan's charters as *minister*, but one of them witnesses so irregularly that it is easy to distinguish the two. Our Eadric witnesses: S 379, S 401, S 403, S 405, S 407, S 411-3, S 416-8, S 418a, S 422-3, S 425, S 427, S 430, S 432, S 438, S 440-1, S 446-9 and S 1604 during Athelstan's reign; S 414-15, S 461, S 463-5, S 470, S 475-6, S 478 and S 511 during Edmund's reign.

¹¹⁷ S 395.

This pattern continues after Edmund succeeded to the throne, and after the promotion of the four ealdormen in 940 Eadric witnessed eleventh or twelfth. Eadric's attestations cease after the last charter from that year, a date that roughly corresponds with Ealdorman Ælfhere's disappearance. It becomes evident therefore that his promotion most likely occurred earlier in 942 than his first appearance as an ealdorman would suggest.

While there is no concrete evidence of any lands granted by King Athelstan, Edmund and his successor were decidedly generous to Eadric. In 940 Eadric was granted four hides at Wooton in Hampshire¹¹⁸, and again in 941 he was furnished with two hides at Stoke, in Dorset.¹¹⁹ Two years later he received 11 hides at Mapperton, also in Dorset.¹²⁰ And in 947 one sees that King Eadred bestowed upon him a whopping total of 40 hides in Berkshire¹²¹ and Wiltshire.¹²²

Eadric no doubt took over a significant part of Wessex, as Hart has suggested.¹²³ This shows that Edmund was continuing to promote individuals from outside Wessex to administrate West Saxon districts. In light of these findings however, it is therefore puzzling to see that Eadric begins witnessing so low on the list of ealdormen during this period.¹²⁴ Based on previous patterns, one would expect to see him witnessing higher than the Mercian ealdormen, as all of the other Wessex magnates had done before him under King Athelstan and King Edmund. Instead Eadric begins witnessing close to the bottom of the lists, with only Uhtred and occasionally Æthelmund witnessing below him. What is even more interesting is that

¹¹⁸ S 467.

¹¹⁹ S 478. Interestingly, this property is in the immediate neighbourhood of part of the landed endowment bestowed upon Æthelflæd of Damerham in 944.

¹²⁰ S 490.

¹²¹ S 525. A grant of 20 hides of land at *Wasing*, in Berkshire.

¹²² S 524. A grant of 20 hides of land at *Ashdown*, in Ashbury, Berkshire; near Ramsbury, in Wiltshire.

¹²³ See Map 21.1 in Hart, *The Danelaw*, 578.

¹²⁴ Eadric witnesses the following charters as *dux*; S 480, S 485, S 487, S 489, S 491, S 493-4, S 503, S 497, S 508 and S 1497 during Edmund's reign; S 517, S 517b, S 518-523, S 526-9, S 531-6, S 540, S 542, S 544 and S 547 during Eadred's reign.

with the exception of only two of King Edmund's charters, Eadric witnesses regularly below Ealdorman Ealhhelm.¹²⁵ As thegns, he and Ealhhelm regularly witnessed right next to each other in King Athelstan's and Edmund's charters, with Eadric ahead of Ealhhelm. This raises the question of whether this change in the patterns is an indicator of a change in King Edmund's policy or a change in status amongst the ealdormen. It may be in fact a little of both, but this cannot be seen by looking at the first year of Eadric's tenure in isolation. Eadric's promotion, and his apparent status in the witness lists in comparison with the Mercian ealdormen, appears related to King Edmund's developing policy in promoting northern and eastern concerns within Wessex.

Also notable in 942 is the enrichment of a certain Wulfsgie 'the Black'. Wulfsgie 'the Black' was the recipient of three land grants in 942, and is described as "Wulfsgie *prenomine maur*" in all three.¹²⁶ They belong to a group of charters known as the "alliterative" series, and have been associated with Bishop Cænwald of Worcester as well as Abbot Dunstan.¹²⁷ Between them the three charters in question bestow a large amount of land throughout Staffordshire and Derbyshire, and the estates invariably lie on or close to the river Trent around Burton.¹²⁸ The location of these lands is significant, as many of the estates appear to create a line stretching east to west north of Tamworth. The bequests therefore may signify an attempt at organizing fortification of the town that had been sacked a year or two before, and by this reckoning it is possible that these lands were granted towards the end of the year, after Edmund had "redeemed" the area of the Five Boroughs. Many of the estates

¹²⁵ S 489 in 943, and S 493 in 944.

¹²⁶ S 479, S 484 and S 1606. See Sawyer, *Charters of Burton Abbey*, nos. 5-7.

¹²⁷ For details on the "alliterative" charters see Whitelock, *EHD*, 372-3, and also Sawyer, *Charters of Burton Abbey*, xlvi-ix; Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 82 n. 165; and Hart, *The Danelaw*, 431-45.

¹²⁸ Sawyer, *Charters of Burton Abbey*, 12.

border important waterways in the area, and this may be suggestive further of a defensive motivation for the grants.

Wulfsige 'the Black' is most likely not to be identified as the Wulfsige who rose to prominence alongside Ealdorman Ælfhere in the late 930s and who disappears from the charter record in 940. Several of the estates granted to Wulfsige 'the Black' ended up in the hands of Wulfric Spot¹²⁹, son of the lady Wulfrun, and it has been suggested that Wulfsige 'the Black' was a relation of them both.¹³⁰ If this identification is accepted, there is room for further speculation. Wulfsige 'the Black' survived the troubles of 940, and appears to have been well rewarded for his service to King Edmund in the intervening years. The grants of land were undoubtedly related to Wulfrun's status, and here it must be remembered that it was Anlaf Gothfrithsson and Archbishop Wulfstan who had captured her. With Anlaf dead, she would likely have been transferred to Archbishop Wulfstan's custody, if it were assumed that she was still being held by this time. As mentioned above, it is far more likely that Archbishop Wulfstan was behind this move in the first place, perhaps as a ploy to influence powerful factions living in Mercia. In 942, after a significant absence, Archbishop Wulfstan began attending King Edmund's royal assemblies, as evidenced by his appearance in the charter record, and his attestation is found in King Edmund's grants to Wulfsige 'the Black.'

Now, if Archbishop Wulfstan was, as is likely, party to Wulfrun's abduction, something significant must have happened between that event in 940 and the royal assembly in 942 where the archbishop witnessed land grants to a relation of hers.¹³¹ It was either an incredibly awkward assembly, or some level of reconciliation had been achieved; Archbishop Oda's abilities and skills as a negotiator may have been at work

¹²⁹ Sawyer, *Charters of Burton Abbey*, 12. See also nos. 27, 29, and 31.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, xlviiii-xlix.

¹³¹ S 479 and S 484; S 1606 has no witness list.

in this case. One might then assume further that Wulfrun had been returned from her captivity by this date, if not before. If this were so, her abduction and return could be viewed as a sort of bargaining chip in the grand scheme of Northumbrian politics during this period. Wulfrun's return around the same time that the English recovered the Five Boroughs reinforces the notion that King Edmund had, if not regained the upper hand at this point, come to some sort of arrangement with the archbishop of York. King Edmund's endowment of Wulfsgige 'the Black' also points to the king's interest in strengthening the position of this powerful Mercian family, perhaps in need of assistance after losses incurred in 940. It also reinforces the suggestion that close relationships with powerful Mercian families was of increasing importance to the English king in these years, and that by this time any damage Anlaf had done was sufficiently mended, or in the process of being repaired.

The recovery of the Five Boroughs in 942 has most often been seen as a defensive move on Edmund's part, as well as a reassertion of West Saxon ambition to rule over the whole of Britain. Often overlooked however is the political situation in Wessex that was developing immediately before, during, and after the campaign. An examination shows that this move came after a considerable period of consolidation and affirmation of purpose at King Edmund's court, and this points to the campaign having been partly influenced by contemporary political concerns. Part of this should be, as suggested above, attributed to the changes that the death of Archbishop Wulfhelm and his replacement by Oda at Canterbury. A significant part of Edmund's invigorated strategy should also be accredited to his growing alliance with, and reliance on the family of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King' and others such as the family of Wulfsgige 'the Black'. It may well be that the increase in Edmund's patronage of Æthelstan 'Half King's family in and after 942 reflects not only

appreciation for his help in the Five Boroughs campaign, but as recognition of a generally energetic and active involvement in the administration of the kingdom, as Eadric was now in an official position of administration in Wessex. King Edmund's promotion of yet another ealdorman around this time is significant, and especially so when it is observed that Eadric does not witness diplomas alongside the rest of the ealdormen in Wessex, but below those in Mercia.

Whether related directly to the aftermath of the Five Borough's campaign or not, in 943 a massive disruption and re-organization at King Edmund's court can be observed. In 943 several of the most prominent men in the kingdom disappear from view. The most prominent of these was Ealdorman Wulfgar of Wiltshire. The second was one Odda, a thegn whose diploma attestations can only be described as exceptional. Odda's attestation in royal diplomas can be traced back as early as the year 904, making him the longest witnessing minister in the first half of the tenth century. He attests at fourth place for a time and then third in the charters of Edward the Elder, and by King Athelstan's reign he regularly witnesses first. With the exception of only six instances (all in which he still witnesses highly), Odda witnesses first amongst the lists of thegns in very nearly all of the extant charters between 925 and 943.¹³² This kind of tenure in the king's *witan* (if indeed this is what is reflected) is almost unheard of, and especially odd when the fact that Odda was never promoted to the position of ealdorman is considered. It can only be speculated as to why an individual who seems to have had such a high status as to attend royal assemblies for so many years never attained a higher position, but this would be beyond the scope of the discussion.

¹³² Odda witnesses the following charters as *minister*: S 362, S 372-8, S 381-3 and S 1286 during Edward the Elder's reign; S 379, S 394, S 400-1, S 403, S 405, S 407, S 411-13, S 416-18a, S 422-3, S 425, S 427, S 430, S 432, S 438, S 440-1, S 443, S 445-9 and S 1604 during Athelstan's reign; S 414-15, S 461, S 463-5, S 467, S 469-71, S 475-6, S 478, S 480, S 483, S 485-9, S 491-2, S 496 and S 511-12 during Edmund's reign.

What is important here is that the senior ealdorman and the senior thegn, both witnessing first among the other men of their respective positions, disappear forever in the same year. The nature of the charter evidence does not allow the conclusion that they left court at precisely the same time, but it may be wondered if this was not the case. Ealdorman Wulfgar and Odda are only the most prominent examples. Several other high-ranking but otherwise unidentifiable thegns who had regularly witnessed Edmund's charters also cease to do so in 943. These are illustrated in Appendices IV and V. This group includes the same Wullaf mentioned above who witnessed between fourth and fifth; one Ordheah, who witnessed between eighth and twelfth; and one Wulfhelm, who witnessed between fourteenth and seventeenth.

Furthermore, it is roughly at this time in 943 that Ealdorman Uhtred ceases attesting diplomas regularly. Uhtred is clearly still alive and in authority from this point on, but whereas he witnessed most of Edmund's charters up to this date, he only witnesses two charters between 944 and 946, after which time he disappears for good.¹³³ The disappearance of these chief men from the number of regular witnesses at this time cannot be a mere coincidence, but with the dearth of evidence it remains difficult to explain it entirely. There is always the possibility that the men who disappear forever died while fighting, and as there appears to have been more than one military campaign during that year, it could explain the dispersed nature of the disappearances that occur over the course of 942-3.¹³⁴ There could also have been a series of retirements en-masse, but this is unlikely when Uhtred's seeming avoidance of royal councils is considered in conjunction with the high rank of the men who disappear.

¹³³ S 497 and S 508.

¹³⁴ Beaven, "King Edmund I and the Danes of York," 7, n.25.

While there is little concrete evidence to suggest so, it is more likely than not that these men constituted a significant court faction, and that at this point they either suffered eclipse or left court voluntarily. When King Edmund's increasing reliance on some of the most powerful families in the kingdom in years previous to 943 is considered, especially those of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King' and other Mercian interests, it may be that this is a further sign of their growing significantly in power and influence not only in their own areas, but in Wessex as well. Also, the coincidence of this development with the aftermath of the retaking of the Five Boroughs suggests that the disappearance of one court faction and the further elevation of another (see below) could be related to the restructuring of the administration of the kingdom.

Dunstan's Return and The Rise of the 'Half-King'

With Ealdorman Eadric's promotion in 942 and Ealdorman Wulfgar's disappearance in 943, there remained six regularly witnessing ealdormen at King Edmund's court by the end of 943. Three of these, Æthelstan 'Half-King,' Æthelwold and Eadric, were brothers, and controlled the areas of East Anglia, Kent, and most of Wessex. It is possible that the men who vanish from the diploma record did so on account of the influence being amassed by Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King' and his kin. It would be easy to come to such a conclusion given what is known about Æthelstan 'Half King', the rest of his family, and their collective power, but there is more evidence to support this theory.

There is little doubt that the rapid promotion of a number of seemingly connected individuals at around this same time in 943-4 in the witness lists is in some way linked to the disappearance of others. The sudden appearance of an individual by

the name of Wulfric to the list of thegns just after this shake-up, witnessing conspicuously highly no less, is likely related to this mass exodus/influx of men, and it is possible to link him to a powerful courtly faction. This Wulfric was most likely the brother of Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury, and before Wulfric and the others promoted around this time are dealt with, it will be necessary to briefly discuss Dunstan's position at King Edmund's court.¹³⁵

The date of Dunstan's return is most important here, as it would seem to correspond well with the timeframe of the situation described above. Dunstan was made abbot of Glastonbury in 942x3, and unfortunately dating his promotion can be no more specific than that.¹³⁶ It can however be said that upon his appointment Dunstan became very quickly involved in charter production and remained close to the royal administration. There is evidence that suggests it was during this time that a new Glastonbury scribe, under the direction of Abbot Dunstan and in close partnership with Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King,' was the primary producer of the so-called 'alliterative series' of royal diplomas. This series, whose production reliably coincides with the eclipse in the year 956 of both Ealdorman Æthelstan and Abbot Dunstan, deals almost exclusively with properties in the midlands and Mercia.¹³⁷

This is significant in and of itself, as the partnership between these two men would seem to have been part of King Edmund's administrative design after the Five Boroughs were retaken. The king's reliance on Dunstan is further exemplified by King Edmund's promotion of Abbot Dunstan's brother Wulfric around the same time.

¹³⁵ This identification was first made by Hart (*ECNENM*, 370-2), echoed by Ann Williams, ("Principes merciorum gentis", 146, 154-5), and most recently trusted by Barbara Yorke ("Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century," 67-8). Sawyer prefers to identify this Wulfric as an early ancestor of Wulfric Spot (Sawyer, *Charters of Burton Abbey*, xlviiii).

¹³⁶ See Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 243-53.

¹³⁷ See Hart, *The Danelaw*, 431-45; Keynes, "King Athelstan's Books", 156-9; and Sawyer, *Charters of Burton*, xlvii-viii.

Apparently the only member of Dunstan's family who went into secular politics, Wulfric had been a well rewarded retainer since at least 940, even though he witnesses no charters until 944.¹³⁸ This Wulfric also seems to have been closely associated with, and possibly related to, the family of Ealdorman Ealhhelm.¹³⁹

As noted above, it is a difficult task to distinguish between the multiple Wulfrics that sometimes witness the same diplomas together, and Hart's conclusion that it was indeed Dunstan's brother who began witnessing in 944, and that Wulfric *Cufing* was the thegn who appears in 940, appears convincing.¹⁴⁰ In addition to their suggestively matching names, it proves useful to treat these two individuals in relation to each other, as it is right after the court shake-up c.943 that their attestations appear to dovetail somewhat.¹⁴¹ Wulfric *Cufing* is one of those individuals about whom much is known from his landholding, but little else. He held around 200 hides of land, most of it ranging across Berkshire, Hampshire and Sussex.¹⁴²

Up until the end of 943 Wulfric *Cufing* witnessed between seventh and seventeenth amongst the *ministri*, but in most cases his attestation remained static at around fifteenth place.¹⁴³ Now, as two of the three major thegns who disappear in

¹³⁸ Dunstan's brother received a princely total of 55 hides that year in Grittleton and Langley, both in Wiltshire (S 472 and S 473).

¹³⁹ Williams, "Principes merciorum gentis", 155, n. 51. Ælfwine, Ealhhelm's youngest son was possibly Wulfric's son in law. See especially Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon I*, clxxiv-clxxxv.

¹⁴⁰ See also C.R. Hart, "Danelaw Charters and the Glastonbury Scriptorium", *Downside Review* 90 (1972), 125-32, at 128-9; and above.

¹⁴¹ These two men have been examined and associated with each other before. See Brooks, "The Career of St. Dunstan," 7-11.

¹⁴² Wulfric *Cufing*'s landholdings are examined fully in Hart, *ECNENM*, 370-71, and in Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon I*, clxxiv-clxxxii. It is also interesting to find that he is one of those few individuals to be in possession of a number of different titles in the texts of grants he received. In addition to being called *Cufing* he was at various times referred to as "princeps" (S 636) and "mihi intimo prae cordialis affectu amoris fideli." (S 552) Titles such as these are often part and parcel of diplomatic courtesy, but it does not preclude the notion that there might not be some genuine feelings behind them. This interesting topic has most recently been visited by John Meddings, in his "Friendship Among the Aristocracy in Anglo-Norman England", *Anglo-Norman Studies* 22 (2000), 187-204.

¹⁴³ Wulfric *Cufing* witnesses the following charters as *minister*: S 448 (probably) during King Athelstan's reign; S 414-15, S 461, S 465, S 469-70, S 475-6, S 478, S 480, S 482-3, S 486-97, S 500, S 503, S 508, S 510, S 512, S 514 and S 1811 during Edmund's reign; S 428, S 516-19, S 521-23, S 525-7, S 529, S 531-6, S 540, S 542-4, S 547, S 550, S 552-52a, S 554, S 556, S 558, S 575 and S 578-

943 (Odda and Wullaf) attest royal diplomas ahead of Wulfric *Cufing*, it might reasonably be expected that all the remaining *ministri* would move up in the standing respective of each other. And as suspicion would have it, most of the other regularly witnessing thegns do just this. Wulfric *Cufing* on the other hand makes a drastic leap between 943 and 944, and after this he begins witnessing regularly at third place, a position that he would maintain throughout the rest of King Edmund's reign, as well as King Eadred's. The notion that Wulfric *Cufing* may have had a close relationship with the Wulfric identified as Dunstan's brother is not only based on their corresponding rise around 943, but also on the fact that for many years afterwards they tend to witness many of the same charters. Indeed there are few diplomas from either King Edmund's or Eadred's reign in which only a single Wulfric *minister* attests.

Wulfric *Cufing* and Wulfric Dunstan's brother were not the only men who appear to have benefited from the departure of certain individuals in 943, and it appears as though King Edmund was promoting just as many persons as were demoted at court. It was at this time also that one Ælfsige makes a conspicuous rise in the rank of thegns; he will be identified as Ælfsige¹ to distinguish him from another individual of that name.¹⁴⁴ Ælfsige¹ became a leading thegn during King Eadred's reign, and was later one of King Eadwig's close councillors. This individual also probably had a close relationship with Ealdorman Ealhhelm and his sons. Whereas Ælfsige¹ had regularly witnessed at around the tenth place, after 943 he witnessed at

9 during King Eadred's reign; S 585, S 589-90, S 592, S 594, S 596, S 598, S 600-1, S 603-9, S 621-4, S 630, S 634-6, S 659, S 663, S 672, S 683 and S 1662 during King Eadwig's reign. At a certain point in the year 956 it becomes virtually impossible to trace the different ministers of that name; it is most likely that when our Wulfric ceases to witness high on the lists in 956 it is because he was disenfranchised, and stopped witnessing entirely, and it is another individual that witnesses after this. See Hart, *ECNENM*, 370-72, and *The Danelaw*, 128-9.

¹⁴⁴ Two individuals with this name witness Edmund's charters, and in some their names appear adjacent to each other. They were probably somehow related, but the lower ranking Ælfsige ceases witnessing regularly after Eadred took the throne, and only the higher ranking of the two rose in the witness lists.

fourth place for the remainder of King Edmund's reign. Throughout King Eadred's as well as King Eadwig's reign, Ælfsige¹'s attestations routinely follow those of Wulfric *Cufing*, and they rise through the ranks of the *ministri* seemingly as a pair.¹⁴⁵ It is especially during King Eadwig's reign that evidence of this closeness between Ælfsige¹ and the sons of Ealdorman Ealhhelm can be observed. In numerous charters from 956 Ælfsige¹ and Ælfheah witness next to each other, and were both addressed in one charter as *discifer*.¹⁴⁶ Indeed, Wulfric *Cufing* and Ælfsige¹ appear more and more to be made men at this time, rapidly rising stars, and possibly being groomed for their own ealdordoms.

Another individual worthy of specific comment is the minister Ælfstan, who will be referred to as Ælfstan¹. While he began witnessing King Edmund's charters in 941, his attestation becomes much more prevalent after 942. Ælfstan¹'s increasing influence at court over these years is measurable, as he received land in Kent on two occasions in 943¹⁴⁷ and 944¹⁴⁸. Both of these estates bordered one owned by queen mother Eadgifu, and the two properties were combined later to form a larger one by the monks of Christ Church, Canterbury.¹⁴⁹ While this proves nothing, it is suggestive that this Ælfstan¹ may have had close ties with Eadgifu and the royal family. He witnesses regularly between the fourth and sixth place, usually below a certain Ælfric and above a second thegn named Ælfstan, who will be identified as

¹⁴⁵ Ælfsige¹ witnesses the following charters as *minister*: S 407, S 411-12, S 416, S 423, S 425, S 427, S 430, S 432(?), S 438, S 440-1 and S 446-9 during King Athelstan's reign; S 414-15, S 461, S 463-5, S 469-71, S 475-6, S 478, S 480, S 482-3, S 485-9, S 491-7, S 500, S 503, S 507-8, S 510-12 and S 1811 during King Edmund's reign; S 517, S 517a-b, S 518-19, S 521-23, S 525-9, S 531-6, S 540, S 542-4, S 547, S 550, S 552-4, S 556, S 558-1, S 563-4, S 570-1 and S 578-9 during King Eadred's reign; S 575, S 577, S 582-3, S 585-91, S 592, S 594, S 596-8, S 600-2, S 603[?], S 604-14, S 616, S 619-22, S 624, S 627, S 629-31, S 635-6, S 638-43, S 645-7, S 649-50, S 653-4, S 656-9, S 660-1, S 663-4, S 666, S 672, S 1291 and S 1662 during Eadwig's reign.

¹⁴⁶ S 597. In this case, two of the individuals named Ælfsige witness, in second and third place respectively, and both are addressed as *discifer*. For commentary on the meaning of this term, see Loyn, "Gesiths and Thegns", 540-1, and L.M. Larson, *The King's Household Before the Norman Conquest* (Madison, 1904), 89 and 133-6.

¹⁴⁷ S 512.

¹⁴⁸ S 497.

¹⁴⁹ See Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, no. 112 [Forthcoming].

Ælfstan². Ælfstan¹ appears to have risen rapidly in the witness lists after the shake up in 943, and came to attest regularly at second place after 944, just above Wulfric Cufing.

During the course of the year 943 and 944, then, several things happened at King Edmunds' court that would appear to be interrelated. A number of high-ranking, regularly witnessing thegns including Odda, the highest and longest witnessing of all of King Edmund's (and King Athelstan's) ministers, disappear forever. Ealdorman Wulfgar of Wiltshire (also incidentally the highest ranking) vanishes as well, and Ealdorman Uhtred begins attending court far less often than he had until this point. The meteoric promotion of two men named Wulfric, seemingly connected to each other is also evident. One was an up-and-coming West Saxon landowner, and the other was not only somehow related to the family of the Mercian Ealdorman Ealhhelm, but who also seems to have been the brother of Dunstan, who was appointed Abbot of Glastonbury Abbey around the same time. Alongside these individuals a number of lesser, yet still important men were promoted, men likely associated with similar interests and connections. Half of all the ealdormen in the realm were brothers, and the eldest of this family, Æthelstan 'Half-King', took over witnessing in the highest position in the witness lists at this same time. Furthermore, Abbot Dunstan of Glastonbury seems at this time to have taken over, or been put in charge of, production of special charters in Mercia and the Danelaw, quite possibly in partnership with the 'Half-King'.¹⁵⁰

It was certainly not a single event that heralded these changes, considering that diverse individuals appear to disappear at various times over the course of the year 943, and that it is not until the diplomas dated 944 were produced that the mingling

¹⁵⁰ Hart, *The Danelaw*, 442-5.

careers of the two Wulfrics and the rise of other individuals are observed.

Speculation about the reasons behind these transformations in King Edmund's councils should be made cautiously. The rearrangements at King Edmund's court could have been part of a major initiative in administrative renewal and organization. The retaking of the Five Boroughs opened up a vast area in need of administration, and this meant jobs. King Edmund needed able administrators to fill the positions necessary to administrate the localities adequately.

Furthermore, Edmund at this time may have felt it necessary to pump new blood into his developing executive skeleton. It is entirely possible that Ealdorman Wulfgar died or was ousted, and with both his and shortly thereafter Odda's voices gone from the *witan*, it was the family of Æthelstan 'Half King,' as well as Ealdorman Ealhhelm that moved to promote their own allies at the expense of other influential factions. It also appears as though Edmund was promoting a large number of individuals who were, at least *prima facie*, close to the families of both Ealhhelm and Æthelstan 'Half King'. This could be interpreted as a sign of increasing cooperation between these two families in the administration of the kingdom, what with the connection with Abbot Dunstan and charter production at Glastonbury. It may be posited further that the promotion of these individuals may be seen as a group associated with queen mother Eadgifu and her concern for the burgeoning interest in monastic reform, combined with the revival of monasticism under Dunstan at Glastonbury.

While the retaking of the Five Boroughs was possibly a causative factor in this observable shift in power and influence, there were likely other mitigating factors. King Edmund's religious proclivities should be considered at this time, and could be tied back to the suggestive nature of the 'Five Boroughs' poem in the *Anglo-Saxon*

Chronicle. The circumstances surrounding Edmund's own relationship with the man he appointed abbot of Glastonbury is not entirely clear. There has been perennial confusion over exactly what it was that prompted Edmund first to banish, and then recall Dunstan from exile. It would be tempting to associate the king's first action towards Dunstan with the rearrangements at court visible in 940, but the timetable is not wholly reliable. The story of Edmund's promise to reinstate Dunstan in return for being saved from plummeting off a cliff in the saint's *vita* leaves much to be explained.

According to the story in the *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, after dismissing Dunstan on account of the persistent conspiracy and rumour surrounding the young monk, King Edmund rid his mind of business by going hunting near his palace at Cheddar. An energetic and easily startled hart lost its way in its panic, and hurled itself off a cliff into Cheddar Gorge. Edmund's hounds quickly followed, and only through a hastily composed prayer promising Dunstan's reinstatement was the king spared the rather long drop along with them.¹⁵¹ It is entirely possible that this is pure hagiographical topos, and that it never actually happened. On the other hand, when the political situation unfolding around the same time is considered, speculation as to whether or not there is not a grain of truth to this anecdote could be helpful. Eric John perhaps said it best: "Whether we call this conversion miraculous, providential, merely psychological, or all three, something very odd must have happened."¹⁵²

Turbulence in military affairs aside, the charter evidence illustrated above suggests that a great court restructuring took place in 943. Such a swift changing of a king's mind would no doubt have produced much chatter and nervousness in court circles, and a near-death experience could easily account for such a massive shift in

¹⁵¹ Eadmer's *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, in Andrew J. Turner and Bernard J. Muir (ed. and trans.), *Eadmer of Canterbury, Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald* (Oxford, 2006), 79-81.

¹⁵² John, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies*, 157.

policy. Even if the Cheddar Gorge story is rejected outright, and there is no real reason to take it as factual, something changed King Edmund's mind. The intrigue and rumour that Dunstan recounted while at court should perhaps not entirely be discounted, what with the powerful factions vying for influence at the time; the great families were exerting pressure of their own.¹⁵³ It is not outside the realm of possibility that sometime in 943 King Edmund went through a profound reassessment of political (and possibly religious) realities, and that his promotion of Dunstan and certain other individuals was a result. Whether it was on the advice (or action) of a court faction, a series of conspicuous and highly coincidental deaths while on campaign in the Five Boroughs, or Edmund's own personal change, by late 943 the victors were clearly Abbot Dunstan, certain powerful Mercian and East Anglian families, and those who were associated with them. This realignment towards these power interests appears closely related to the disappearance of certain individuals from the charter record.

Great care should be taken here. It is not suggested that the account in Dunstan's *vita* is factually accurate, but that it perhaps contains more than a grain of descriptive truth. Something significant was occurring at King Edmund's court during these years, and the changes appear to have been rapid. Perhaps behind the story lies the reality that people in the kingdom were reacting to these changes, and seeking to explain them. Underlining this is the notion that King Edmund was actively seeking to bring reconciliation to certain factions at his court, interest groups that were experiencing great uncertainty and possibly political readjustment. Such an explanation of course assumes that King Edmund's own intentions lie behind what is observed, and this is far from demonstrable; the factions at court could very well have

¹⁵³ *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, 79.

been calling the shots. It would seem that a strengthened partnership between the families of Ealhhelm, Æthelstan ‘Half King’ and other individuals possibly associated with monastic reform arose or began to solidify at precisely this time, and very quickly after certain individuals were no longer in a position of influence at King Edmund’s court.¹⁵⁴ All circumstantial evidence aside, it is highly suggestive that it was around this time that Ealdorman Æthelstan ‘Half King’ began earning his semi royal by-name.

In addition to the changes observable in the composition of the royal court there is reason to believe that the year 943 saw some significant shifts in familial relations between King Edmund, his mother Eadgifu, and his younger brother Eadred. It has been long recognized that Eadred’s prominence alongside his mother at King Edmund’s court was virtually without precedent.¹⁵⁵ While the attestation of a king’s brother and/or son are not entirely uncommon in West Saxon royal charters, Eadred’s attestations stand out not only by their sheer number, but also the fact that he often witnesses alongside his mother, and does so from a very early date in Edmund’s reign. Eadred witnesses thirty-three of Edmund’s extant charters, more than half of what has survived.¹⁵⁶ Of these Eadred witnesses thirteen independent of his mother, and in the remaining twenty he witnesses alongside her.

This in itself is not so surprising; if indeed, as has been often been suggested, Eadred was intended to succeed after Edmund from an early date, his prominence at court and in royal documents would be somewhat expected. What is of primary

¹⁵⁴ One is very tempted to associate Odda in particular with that group of thegns who originally opposed Dunstan’s attendance at court. By this time Odda must have been positively ancient, and would probably not only be decidedly set in his ways, but would command a certain level of respect from his peers as well. Incidentally, it is his disappearance in the charter record that corresponds closest with the appearance of Wulfic, Dunstan’s brother.

¹⁵⁵ Stafford, *The King’s Wife in Wessex 800-1066*, 25.

¹⁵⁶ Eadred witnesses the following charters during of King Edmund’s reign: S 459-61, S 463-70, S 475-8, S 480-1, S 483, S 485, S 487-9, S 491, S 494-7, S 501, S 505-6, S 511-12 and S 514.

interest here is his witnessing pattern in relation to his mother's. During the first four years of King Edmund's reign whenever both Eadgifu and Eadred witness diplomas together, Eadgifu invariably witnesses first, and Eadred second. For the last three years of Edmund's reign, however, whenever they witness together Eadred consistently attests ahead of his mother. At some time during 943 or 944 Eadred appears to have replaced his mother as the most prominent witness to King Edmund's charters (save Edmund himself, of course). The nature of the extant documents does not allow more precision in the dating of this change, but it can be said with some confidence that it occurred late in 943 or early in 944. Both Eadred and Eadgifu continue to witness prominently, but Eadred's elevated status in relation to his mother is unmistakable.

Such a shift in the family hierarchy projected in royal documents could not have gone unnoticed, and this could represent a further significant modification of King Edmund's policy. Such changes could be attributed to Edmund's taking the initiative by replacing his mother with his brother as his most influential counsellor. This would not necessarily mean a lessening of Eadgifu's status, but instead an acknowledgment of Eadred's gaining a more formal position at court. This could in turn imply that it was at least partly upon Eadred's advice that many of the changes observed around the same time were initiated. Eadred was at least eighteen years old by this point, and while he is never identified as *atheling*, he could have been considered throne worthy.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁷ It might be tempting to suggest that it had something to do with the death of King Edmund's first wife sometime in 944. Other than the apparently matching date however, there is no direct evidence to support this. Edmund's two young sons now motherless, they were likely entrusted to the care of their grandmother Eadgifu, and the change in attestation patterns could also reflect the added responsibility she likely took on at this point. As will be seen in chapter six, it was most likely through her that the young Eadwig and Edgar were fostered in the household of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half-King'.

It has hopefully been demonstrated that King Edmund's reign can be usefully divided into two distinct periods, that before 943 and after. In four years Edmund had appointed five new ealdormen and seemingly restructured the composition of his *witan* to a considerable degree by elevating thegns associated closely with the families of those same ealdormen. King Edmund's many appointments and promotions appear to be closely associated with the disappearance of a large number of 'old guard' individuals, thegns and ealdormen who had been influential under King Athelstan. King Edmund also appears to have broken with Athelstan's policies towards Mercians, by bringing them closer into the English administrative framework. While more entrenched West Saxon interests do not appear neglected, it does appear that Edmund was growing closer to many of his Mercian and East Anglian subjects at the expense of certain West Saxon interests, by promoting more Mercians and East Anglians both within Mercia and in Wessex as well.

One is struck by Edmund's seeming ability to maintain the loyalty of certain powerful families vying for influence at his court through his careful manipulation of control over the localities. It is difficult not to conclude that the royal family appears to have increasingly worked in concert towards such an end, and that the level of cooperation and familial cohesion between Edmund, Eadgifu and Eadred can only be considered exceedingly high throughout these years. Part and parcel of this policy appears to have been a profound consolidation of influence away from certain families and interests within Wessex, towards a group more closely associated with regional interests in Mercia and East Anglia that had close ties to the royal family. Edmund appears as the governor not of a "composite state," (Stenton's words) but one

being much more integrated and administrated as a single kingdom, by the breaking down of certain factional barriers between regions.¹⁵⁸

King Edmund's Coinage

Some further insights into the relationship between Wessex and Mercia in the 940s may be provided by an examination of the coin evidence. While a detailed examination of King Edmund's coins would be beyond the scope of the current investigation, some cursory observations can be made. Unfortunately the many coin finds and the differences between them cannot be convincingly dated more specifically than the terminal dates of King Edmund's reign, so conclusions must remain general as to chronology and moment. While continuity to a degree is observed between the two king's reigns, it is worth noting that generally during King Athelstan's reign "traditions of the former independent kingdoms are still in some measure maintained."¹⁵⁹ That is, regional differences in coin production reflected a high degree of local control.

There is some evidence to suggest that during King Edmund's reign this practice may have undergone modification, and that a greater degree of uniformity began to replace such regional independence. For example, during King Edmund's reign a particular type of coin associated with production in Wessex appears significantly reduced, while it was popular during Athelstan's reign. Only a very few examples of the Circumscription Cross (CC) type exist, and the Horizontal Type (HT) appears to have predominated.¹⁶⁰ The CC type coin appears to have been struck throughout all areas under King Athelstan's authority, except East Anglia, but King

¹⁵⁸ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 346.

¹⁵⁹ C.E. Blunt, B. H.I.H. Stewart and C. S.S. Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England From Edward the Elder to Edgar's Reform* (Oxford, 1989), 109.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 111.

Edmund appears to have replaced these issues with HT type coins. Furthermore, during Edmund's reign the practice of naming the mint where a coin was produced seems to have gone out of practice almost entirely.¹⁶¹ This may be evidence of a greater degree of centralized control over the coinage, and the diminution of regional management.

Also significant is the noticeable shift away from Mercian independence in coin styles bearing the image of the crowned king, in the so-called Bust Crowned (BC) type. During King Athelstan's reign moneyers in English Mercia appear to have preferred their own local CC type coins to those of the BC type, which was primarily minted in Wessex and East Anglia.¹⁶² In King Edmund's reign, the BC type appears to have been introduced into the areas of North East Mercia, and was produced alongside the HT types. It is significant that many of the same moneyers who were employed by King Athelstan in these Eastern Mercian areas continued under Edmund and Eadred, so this change is unlikely to have been on account of the replacement of individual moneyers.¹⁶³ It is also significant that the expansion of the BC type earlier in King Athelstan's reign may be attributed to the influence of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King' in East Anglia, and it has been speculated that his oversight of this type may be associated with a desire to bring that area more closely into royal control in the 930s.¹⁶⁴ It could be the case that King Edmund was pursuing a similar policy in North East Mercia through the introduction and predominance of the BC type in these areas.

While the HT and BC types are predominant during King Edmund's reign, there are hints at some regional differences. For the Horizontal type specifically,

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 269.

¹⁶² Ibid, 109.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 118.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 109-10.

there are a large number of variants that can be attributed to either north of south of the Thames.¹⁶⁵ King Edmund appears to have introduced a Mercian variant of the Horizontal type; marked by a rosette of pellets and identified as the Horizontal Rosette (HR) type, this issue appears to have been centred around the Derby mint, and there are suggestions of Norse influence.¹⁶⁶ It is also significant that while during King Athelstan's reign the BC type appears to have been commonly struck throughout southern areas of the kingdom, during Edmund's reign this type is only found to have been produced in East Anglia and the eastern areas of Mercia.¹⁶⁷

The coin evidence suggests several things. There are hints at an increased uniformity of production throughout the kingdom in certain types such as the HT, but the styles within these types appear to maintain a limited degree of local variation. Exceptional and irregular types of coins are at their nadir during King Edmund's reign compared with the rest of the tenth century before King Edgar's reform, but assumptions from this detail should be limited, as examples are influenced by chance survival.¹⁶⁸ The increasingly localized nature of the Crowned Bust coinage is marked, and its association with eastern and Mercian areas is suggestive of a shift away from certain southern practices seen under King Athelstan. It would be hazardous to make too much of the coin evidence for the political situation observed so far, but it does appear to tally well with much of what has been suggested; that during his reign King Edmund was reassessing the administration of the disparate areas subject to his control, and that interaction between local and centralized control was undergoing changes. There were still local variants, but they appear to have been restricted, and

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 120-2.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 120.

¹⁶⁷ C.E. Blunt suggests the tenuous possibility of there being a mint at Bedford where BC type coins were produced during King Edmund's reign; see "The Crowned Bust Coinage of Edmund, 939-946", *British Numismatic Journal* 40 (1971), 17-21, at 19-20.

¹⁶⁸ C.E. Blunt, B. H.I.H. Stewart and C. S.S. Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England From Edward the Elder to Edgar's Reform*, 202-10.

this may suggest an increasing cooperation between centralized control and local independence. Contrary to the suggestion that King Edmund was continuing many of Athelstan's policies, though this did occur to a degree, moves towards increasing and strengthening the administrative cohesion between local districts and royal uniformity could lie behind the changes observable in an examination of the coinage.¹⁶⁹

King Edmund's International Relations in the Aftermath of the Five Boroughs

The year 944 saw a great deal of change in Edmund's life, for in this year the king, seemingly having sorted domestic issues to a degree, again turned his focus to Northumbria and the thorny issue of who was going to rule over York. Edmund's sponsorship of first Óláfr Cuarán and then Ragnall Guthfrithsson in such a small space of time suggests that so long as terms were agreeable, King Edmund was willing to tolerate as ruler of York anyone with whom amicable business could be done. This perhaps explains Óláfr's motivation to return to York in 944 after being thrown out by the men of York soon after his baptism. Óláfr's reasoning may have been that if King Edmund had supported him once, why might he not a second time? Alex Woolf has suggested that Óláfr's return prompted a civil war between himself and Ragnall.¹⁷⁰ Neither of them was to hold power any longer, as Edmund seized the opportunity to remove the two troublesome Vikings from York, and did so decisively in 944.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ The above examination of King Edmund's coinage has been admittedly brief, and there remains much work to be done on coinage in the tenth century, and the period 940-56 especially. New coins and unique specimens are increasingly coming to light through individual metal detector finds, and according to Gareth Williams of the British Museum, a number from this period remain unexamined.

¹⁷⁰ See his forthcoming volume in the New History of Scotland series, *From Pictland to Alba, 789-1070* (2007).

¹⁷¹ ASC 'A' sub anno 944: "Here King Edmund brought all Northumbria into his domain, and caused to flee away two kings, Olaf Sihtricson and Rægnald Guthfrithson." (Her Eadmund cyning geeode eal Norþhymbra land him to gewældan 7 aflymde ut twegen cyninges, Anlaf Syhtrices sunu 7 Rægnald Guðferþes sunu).

As opposed to the years 939x43, the narrative sources between 944x6 are more reliable. The recensions of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* have essentially the same information, worded slightly differently, for the year 944. They all agree that King Edmund regained control of Northumbria, and ejected Óláfr and Ragnall from York. According to the *Chronicle* of Æthelweard, Archbishop Wulfstan and a certain ealdorman of Mercia expelled Óláfr and Ragnall from York and forced them to submit to King Edmund.¹⁷² This account stresses Edmund's non-participation in the Northumbrian campaign, as the mention of Archbishop Wulfstan makes clear. It is highly unlikely that King Edmund had no hand in this action, and Æthelweard is probably here allowing Edmund's delegates some credit. It has been suggested that Ealdorman Æthelmund of Mercia is the individual mentioned, but this seems an overhasty assumption; it could easily have been Ealdorman Ealhhelm or Ealdorman Æthelstan.¹⁷³

Still, the position Archbishop Wulfstan found himself in when it became clear that King Edmund was of a mind to rid himself of certain recalcitrant Scandinavians should not be discounted. If Æthelweard is to be trusted, Archbishop Wulfstan may have at this time welcomed and encouraged King Edmund's march north, perhaps having grown weary of the endless in-fighting that seems to have gone on between the successive Viking rulers of Northumbria. It is in this year that Wulfstan again began attending the king's assemblies and witnessing his charters, after a brief absence in the documents from 943.

¹⁷² See A. Campbell (ed.), *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (London, 1962), 54. It is possible that the ealdorman of Mercia mentioned by Æthelweard was Æthelstan 'Half-King', but there is no way to say this for certain. While the 'Half King' was Edmund's highest-ranking ealdorman, he was clearly in control of East Anglia, while much of Mercia was under the control of Ealdormen Ealhhelm and Æthelmund. The actual identity of Edmund's chief general would be helpful, and it is interesting that Æthelweard stresses the involvement of suffragans.

¹⁷³ See the entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8501?docPos=6>.

Several high-ranking thegns disappear from diploma witness lists in 944, and while it is possible that they died in the military campaign of that year, it is equally possible that their disappearance represents a further change in King Edmund's councils. Four particular thegns, Ælfsige¹, Ælfsige², Ælfstan¹ and Ælfstan² regularly witness King Edmund's charters; they have been discussed in greater detail above. Ælfsige², who witnessed regularly between twelfth and fifteenth place and Ælfstan², who witnessed regularly between the fifth and seventh place (both the lower ranking of the four, by name) both disappear in 944.

In 944 Edmund promoted another ealdorman, significantly not from the number of usual witnessing thegns. A certain Ælfwold makes an appearance in a single charter from that year, which records a grant of twenty hides at Woolstone, in Berkshire, to Wulfric *Cufing*.¹⁷⁴ Unfortunately this is the only evidence of Ælfwold's existence as an ealdorman; the appointment may have been temporary.¹⁷⁵ That the grant was to Wulfric *Cufing* could be suggestive of some relationship between Ælfwold and the family of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King', and it may be significant that Ælfwold attests above Ealdorman Eadric in the witness list. It is impossible to place Ælfwold in any district, but his promotion is possible evidence that King Edmund was in need of additional ealdormen to administrate the localities, or to assist him militarily; it may also further the suggestion that Wulfric *Cufing* was increasingly influential at court.

It was in 944 that Edmund also promoted yet another ealdorman from the ranks of the *ministri*, one Wulfgar. Wulfgar's identity is less ethereal than Ælfwold's. Wulfgar had risen through the ranks of the thegns since the early 930s, and had witnessed King Edmund's charters prominently from 942, when he was second only

¹⁷⁴ S 503.

¹⁷⁵ In 946 a thegn by that name received land in Romney Marsh, Kent, but it is unlikely that they are the same person; see Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, no.115 [Forthcoming].

to Odda. Upon Odda's disappearance in 943, Wulfgar witnessed at the first place amongst the *ministri*. In 944 Wulfgar ceased witnessing as a thegn, and one Eadmund *minister* moves into his place. Wulfgar may have initially been a suffragan in western Wessex, as he does not appear to witness regularly as an ealdorman.¹⁷⁶ In fact, only one document from King Edmund's reign bears his attestation as an ealdorman; Wulfgar attests at the third place, below Æthelstan 'Half King' and ahead of Eadric.¹⁷⁷ Wulfgar witnesses much more regularly during King Eadred's reign, usually at the fourth place, and this seeming non-attendance at court may be attributable to the breakdown in charter survival around this time; this may also explain why there is only one example of Ealdorman Ælfwold's attestation.

The disappearances and promotions visible in 944 do not exhibit the same hasty pattern as the court shake-up in 943, and so they could reflect a comparatively minor adjustment at court. King Edmund's promotion of one permanent ealdorman and perhaps a temporary suffragan in this year could have been part of either a continuance of his administrative changes, or immediate military concerns. Still, the diploma evidence suggests that the composition and orientation of King Edmund's closest body of secular delegates continued to change and develop in the year after his massive court reshuffle c.943.

It may be significant that King Edmund appears to have been promoting more individuals within Wessex specifically at this time, and this could reflect further changes in King Edmund's relationship with families and the local powers that were based within the West Saxon heartlands. There is some evidence to suggest that there was a degree of fluctuation in the availability of land in Wessex around this time.

¹⁷⁶ In 943 Wulfgar was given ten hides at South Newton in Wiltshire (S 492), and in 944 he received five hides at Hinton St Mary (Dorset). For more on this Wulfgar see Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, no. 15.

¹⁷⁷ S 508.

While King Edmund continued to make grants of land during these years, there exists a curious cluster of charters in 943x4 in which large payments (usually of gold) are recorded for certain estates.¹⁷⁸ Three of the estates in question are in Berkshire, one is in Devon and one is in Wiltshire; two are to Wulfric *Cufing*¹⁷⁹, one is to Ealdorman Æthelstan ‘Half King’¹⁸⁰, one is to Ælfsige¹⁸¹, and one is to an Ordulf *minister*.¹⁸² As noted above, Ælfsige¹ likely had close ties to both Wulfric *Cufing* as well as Ealdorman Ealhhelm, and one observes the further enrichment of Æthelstan ‘Half King’; this could be a sign of a closely allied group buying up land in a hurry.

One could make too much of this cluster of purchase-grants, but the timeliness and the number do stand out compared with other periods. However, if it is accepted that the individuals mentioned above who disappear from the witness lists c.943 such as Ealdorman Wulfgar and Odda *minister* left on account of changes at court, they may well have been disgraced and/or dispossessed. If this was the case, the large number of payments and grants in 944 could be a sign of King Edmund rewarding loyal retainers with lands confiscated from the faction that was removed in 943. Such a possibility would point further to the notion that King Edmund’s relationship with certain interests within Wessex was experiencing a reassessment during these years. With certain powerful interests seemingly no longer in power, King Edmund appears to have been promoting new individuals into positions of influence to replace those who died or were disenfranchised, and the new men replacing the old can be shown to have been associated. Furthermore, in and after 943x4 King Edmund can be observed rewarding a distinct group of close retainers within Wessex, and it is significant that a large number of ealdormen were promoted within this particular region. It suggests a

¹⁷⁸ See S 471, S 486, S 498, S 500 and S 503.

¹⁷⁹ S 471 and S 503.

¹⁸⁰ S 498.

¹⁸¹ S 486.

¹⁸² S 500.

growing demand for a tighter control of the localities, through an increased number of secular delegates, men who were close to interests in Mercia and East Anglia as well.

Unfortunately little more can be determined from diploma witness lists after the year 944. Only six diplomas are extant for the years 945 and 946 (three from each year), and one is of questionable authenticity.¹⁸³ It could be the case that this reflects a change in production of royal diplomas, but it is more likely that the dearth of evidence can be attributed to the survival of documents. For the last two years of Edmund's reign we are therefore at the mercy of the narrative sources for much of our information.

In 945 King Edmund began to exert his authority further north even more strongly. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, in 945 "King Edmund raided across all the land of Cumbria and ceded it to Malcolm, king of Scots, on the condition that he would be his co-operator both on sea and on land."¹⁸⁴ Roger of Wendover adds to this information, stating that Edmund on this occasion blinded the sons of King Dunmail of Strathclyde.¹⁸⁵ The picture of this campaign remains obscure. There are a number of competing theories behind King Edmund's decision to attack Cumberland in 945. Smyth believed that King Edmund grew enraged with Dunmail after the king of Strathclyde gave sanctuary and assistance to Óláfr Cuarán after his expulsion from York.¹⁸⁶ Rollason has suggested that it was a defensive move designed to curtail future Viking incursions from the north.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ S 505-10. There is considerable debate over the authenticity of S 507; see Hart, *The Danelaw*, 59; Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 143 n.212; and also David Dumville, *English Caroline Script and Monastic History* (Woodbridge, 1993), 35-6 and 38.

¹⁸⁴ ASC 'A', sub anno. "Her Eadmund cyning oferhergode eal Cumbra land 7 hit let to eal Malculme Scotta cyninges on þæt gerad þæt he wære his midwyrhta ægþer ge on sæ ge on lande."

¹⁸⁵ *Roger of Wendover*, 252-3.

¹⁸⁶ Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, 112-3.

¹⁸⁷ Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100, Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom*, 266.

These are both likely possibilities. Whatever the actual case, it remains important to stress the developing relationship between King Edmund and Malcolm. After Constantine retired to St Andrews in 943, Malcolm had acceded to the throne and immediately supported Óláfr Cuarán in York. Once Edmund did the same in 944, one may be excused the thought that the three got along amicably. The men of York clearly saw differently, and upon Óláfr's expulsion Malcolm's own position may have been threatened. King Dunmail came from a competitive line of Malcolm's family, so when Edmund expressed his intentions to rid himself of Óláfr, Malcolm surely saw the opportunity to divest himself of two problems at once.

Thus King Edmund's blinding of Dunmail's sons should not be seen as solely a vengeful act, but instead as a move to help Malcolm's position in his own kingdom, as Smyth has also suggested.¹⁸⁸ This was a boon to Malcolm, as he now appears to have had an English King doing him favours. This was still in King Edmund's best interests as well, as with a powerful Scots king in the north he could more comfortably turn his attention away from the incursions by Scandinavians into his northern territories, or perhaps so he thought. Malcolm seems not to have disengaged himself from supporting Óláfr Cuarán, as he attacked England again some three years later in 948 with Óláfr's help, but it is easy to forget that this occurred when the political situation was decidedly different. It is debatable whether or not King Edmund may have felt the arrangement of 945 could last for long, but the rather drastic action of blinding could be interpreted also as a visible display of ruthlessness that he perhaps felt his relations with the north had heretofore lacked. While English agents may or may not have been behind the death of Anlaf Gothfrithsson, King

¹⁸⁸ Alfred Smyth, *Warlords and Holy Men, Scotland A.D. 80-1000* (London, 1984), 222-3.

Edmund was making his presence and authority known north of the Humber in a big and rather sudden way.

The Scottish campaign in 945 was surely of no small stature, as Stenton has suggested¹⁸⁹, and King Edmund clearly had time to stop and show his respects at St Cuthbert's tomb. This was a move designed to display appreciation as well as confidence. King Edmund was reaffirming West Saxon affiliations with St Cuthbert's, and his own authority in general in Northumbria; such a visit was intended to show not only affirmation, but also perhaps a degree of reliance. Chester-le-Street was Edmund's main toehold in the north, and as has been seen the English king's close affiliation with the cult was high on his list of priorities. He clearly at this point was keen on maintaining this relationship through gifts and tribute, as King Athelstan had done. At Chester-le-Street Edmund bestowed upon St Cuthbert precious silks from the orient, possibly as thanks not only for success against Dunmail but perhaps also acknowledgement of the saint's assistance in the dispatching of Anlaf Gothfrithsson in 941.¹⁹⁰ The politics of gift and counter-gift are evident here, and Edmund may have been gaining valuable influence for his benefactions.

One wonders then whether or not Edmund considered this a new beginning in his relations with the north, or a return to the conditions that he had inherited in 940. King Edmund had the upper hand in 945, despite Óláfr Cuarán's at large status; and Archbishop Wulfstan appears to have been compliant, if his attendance at Edmund's court is any indication of his allegiances, however temporary. It may be helpful to interpret King Edmund's raiding of Strathclyde, combined with the trip to visit St Cuthbert, as an ostentatiously aggressive move designed to impress upon his enemies,

¹⁸⁹ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 359.

¹⁹⁰ *Historia De Sancto Cuthberto*, 66-7.

as well as his friends, that he was increasingly in charge of his kingdom, and that Northumbria and Cumbria were English dominions, not Malcolm's.

If King Edmund was confident at this point late in 945, he may very well have had reason to be. Perhaps such confidence lay behind his decision to intervene directly in continental affairs early in 946. It is important to understand Edmund's move in its proper context. Two years earlier a group of Northmen had exploited a disagreement between Count Alan of Nantes and Berengar of Rennes, and attacked, rendering Brittany in a state of calamity. This prompted king Louis d'Outremer of Aquitaine, King Edmund's cousin, to attack Normandy, and a conflict between him and Hugh the Great of Frankia arose when Hugh appeared reluctant to assist Louis.¹⁹¹ Hugh, it is remembered, had married Edmund's sister, Eadhild. There is no evidence to suggest that Edmund became involved at this point, for such disagreements between continental neighbours were common.

Throughout 945 the situation between Louis and Hugh worsened, with Louis pillaging Hugh's lands with a hired Viking army and Hugh taking hostages. Harold, the Norman leader, appears to have seen the situation as an opportunity to make even more profit, and attempted to capture Louis with a feigned peace meeting. Louis escaped this plot only to fall into the hands of other Vikings whom he believed to be allies. The situation grew tense and serious, and Louis' wife Queen Gerberga was asked for her two sons as hostages for her husband's safe return. She sent Charles, the younger of the two, and Louis was turned over into the custody of Hugh the Great.

So things stood until early in 946. Otto III of Saxony, who was married to Edmund's sister Edith (and therefore brother in law to both King Edmund and Hugh the Great, and second cousin to Louis d'Outremer), appears not to have been

¹⁹¹ *Annals of Flodoard*, 40-1.

interested in becoming embroiled in what was becoming a potentially explosive family spat. Edmund may have felt his hand pressed, and he appears to have taken on the role of peacemaker between his bellicose relatives. This may be a further sign of King Edmund's interest in maintaining close family cohesion, even with seemingly distant continental relations. Thus this episode should perhaps be seen in a more family oriented context, rather than a strictly political one. One wonders greatly how much queen mother Eadgifu's influence lay behind this delegation, as it was her daughters that were also caught up in the dispute.

One also wonders just who the delegates were. The term "legates" used by Flodoard of Reims implies an ecclesiastical element, and it was likely a delegation of both church and secular officials, men who could be spared while Edmund perhaps still had his Scottish campaign on his mind. The fact also that it was likely a winter crossing of the channel emphasises the seriousness of the mission. Edmund sent his delegation to Hugh, and petitioned directly for Louis d'Outremer's release. Edmund was telling his brother-in-law to let his cousin go. One wonders if Edmund was also reminding Hugh that the English relationship with Louis d'Outremer ran deeper than his own family connection. There is no hint of either a military threat or the notion that such an option was on the table, but the fact that upon Edmund's communiqué Hugh then "held public meetings with his nephews and with other magnates of the kingdom" suggests that he took Edmund seriously, but cautiously.¹⁹² Hugh took the hint and restored Louis shortly thereafter.

It would be easy to discount this episode as a minor subplot in a much more insular-oriented narrative. One would do well to remember the family connections between the protagonists however, as well as what light it may shine on King

¹⁹² *Annals of Flodoard*, 44.

Edmund's designs and character. His intervention could have been rooted in continuing King Athelstan's policies towards Louis d'Outremer, and as such would reflect a long-term strategy in relations with continental counterparts. On the other hand it may reflect more immediate concerns. Louis had been held for almost a year by the time he was released, and it is plausible that Otto may have pressured King Edmund to pressure Hugh, after Otto's own counsel proved ephemeral. That Edmund was willing to do so at the time he did may be on account of his attention being focused on Scotland, or perhaps a more pragmatic approach to involving himself in continental affairs. In any case, it is a good example of how international family connections could prove beneficial to parties at odds

The source of all of this information, Flodoard of Reims, was interested far more with the continental context, and while he clearly considered Edmund's interventions worthy of mention, the English King was far from a subject of great attention. Still, the episode shows that King Edmund's influence on and involvement in continental affairs was closely related to family concerns, and this tallies well with what has been observed regarding the degree of cohesion and closeness amongst the royal family around this time. That it was King Edmund's delegations that won over when Otto's influence was seemingly not appreciated as greatly possibly shows that English influence both at home and abroad was on the increase. It may also suggest that King Edmund's delegations were considered less politically sensitive than Otto's, as a mediator slightly more removed from the immediate continental political situation could have been seen as beneficial. Such an interpretation would in turn imply King Edmund having a strong position within his own kingdom, and it is possible to attribute at least part of this to his prescribed control over the internal concerns of his kingdom.

Conclusions

The sources contain no more information for narrative political events during King Edmund's life. The king's actions and deeds between his legations to Hugh in early 946 are his last recorded until one reads of his celebrating the festival of St Augustine in the West Country. It was there that he met with an assassin's dagger, and died on the floor of his hall. King Edmund's body was taken to Glastonbury, where it was interred under the supervision of Abbot Dunstan. Edmund's sons Eadwig and Edgar being still far too young, Eadred was the obvious choice to accede to the throne. The varied accounts of King Edmund's assassination have been examined in chapter two, but it would be of benefit to consider the facts in the context of the preceding argument. It is not suggested that at such a distance the plotting and circumstances behind Edmund's killing can be discovered. However the fact that he was murdered alone is evidence that he had any number of powerful enemies willing to do him ill. Unfortunately the accounts stress only the actions of Liofa, a man who seems to have acted alone and who was then himself killed by King Edmund's bodyguards.

The question of 'who would benefit most?' from King Edmund's death should be raised and tentatively answered. The first and most obvious potential culprit would be Edmund's younger brother Eadred. The West Saxon tradition of lateral succession ensured that once Edmund bore sons, it would be they who would succeed him, once they reached maturity. While there is no evidence for such a move, Eadred could have become disillusioned with the notion of being merely the future king's uncle instead of king himself. This is however highly unlikely. Such action would have been extremely out of character for the royal family at this time. There is no evidence to suggest that Edmund and Eadred were at odds with each other, and the family as a

whole seems at this time to have been very close. That Eadred never married nor bore children shows that his own concern for the stability of the royal succession may very well have been considerable as well.

It is unlikely also that any malicious intent can be attributed to any of the major families who benefited from King Edmund directly during his reign. The families of Ealdormen Æthelstan 'Half King', Ealhhelm and others were well placed and influential. From what is known of their activities and interests they would have had little reason to benefit from King Edmund's death. William of Malmesbury's account tells us that Liofa had been banished from the kingdom for his wicked thievery, and returned after six years.¹⁹³ If there is any veracity to this account, it may be wondered where he was and what he was doing for these six years. If he had left the kingdom, he could have gone anywhere, possibly to the continent, Scotland or Ireland.

It would be tempting to weave a tale associating Liofa with some of King Edmund's foreign enemies, and if anybody wanted Edmund dead it would have been the Vikings of York and Dublin who the king had so thoroughly (or so he thought) removed from power. Indeed, the fact that shortly after Edmund's death in 947 Eadred was obliged to attack Northumbria lends credence to the possibility that Óláfr Cuarán or his allies lay somehow behind the plot to kill him, and the circumstances surrounding the death of Anlaf Gothfrithsson may have produced yet more discontents. Such a theory however lacks any substantial evidence to support it, and must remain merely supposition. The notion that discontented individuals and factions within Wessex could lie behind King Edmund's death could be a possibility,

¹⁹³ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 230-3.

seeing as how he was killed in the West Country, but again, the evidence is just too scanty to provide valuable insight.

The picture that emerges from an examination of King Edmund's charters in relation to known political events suggests that his reign was characterized by constant change and innovation. There are suggestions that he was a king who was quick to change his mind, what with his banishment and reinstatement of Dunstan; however there is also the constant theme of pragmatic reaction to rapidly changing circumstances. When the kingdom was invaded in 940, he struck back, and bided his time after being initially disappointed. King Edmund's dealings with Northumbria and Scotland are difficult to disentangle from the confused narrative sources, but Edmund showed himself, perhaps after some initial missteps, to be well attuned to the pulse of Northumbrian politics.

Within England the same cast of characters return again and again when who King Edmund was relying on for the administration of the kingdom is examined, and there is no doubt that it was during his reign that the families of Ealdorman Ealhhelm, Æthelstan 'Half King', Abbot Dunstan and Archbishop Oda of Canterbury were the king's essential partners. After re-conquering the Five Boroughs, Edmund appears to have initiated a fresh administrative strategy to deal with the newly incorporated areas, which may have involved a purge of certain secular officials and the promotion of new ones in their stead. Indeed, the events of the years 942-4 can best be described as the defining period of his reign.

Throughout King Edmund's reign one also observes a thorough reassessment of the balance between promoting different regional interests. The large number of ealdormen who were promoted throughout Mercia and Wessex, the alliances between those promoted and the changes in coin production in certain regions is suggestive of

an increased attentiveness to issues of the relationship between royal and local control. This theme will be expanded in the next chapter, where a new set of evidence will be examined, King Edmund's legislation. By looking closely at what King Edmund may have wanted his legislation to accomplish, in light of what has been observed of his reign so far, further light may be shed on King Edmund's England, and the mid-tenth-century in general.

Chapter V:

Being Everywhere At Once: Royal and Local Authority in King Edmund's Legislation¹

It was in the second quarter of the tenth century that the West Saxon kings were still developing the ways and means by which they would organize and administer the former kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia, Northumbria and the areas of the Danelaw not separately, but jointly. As one scholar has noted of the period, echoing no doubt many others, "We should dearly like to know, but do not, how far these areas had been integrated within the machinery of West Saxon government."² This chapter does not claim to have an answer to this ambiguity, but it would like to consider how kings might have gone about the process of achieving it. Kings Edward the Elder (899-924) and Athelstan (924-39) laid much of the groundwork, and this process continued under Edmund (939-46) and his successors; but Edmund has not received a comparable amount of attention from historians.

This chapter will raise questions and address some seemingly overlooked points of what could be termed King Edmund's administrative policies. His legislation is one of the ways forward.³ In a period when kings were busily trying to boost their perceived importance, as well as making sure that their importance was supported by actual power, we might inquire as to whether or not they may have attempted to express their authority

¹ A version of this chapter is to be published in the forthcoming volume *Proceedings of the MANCASS Royal Authority Conference* edited by Gale Owen-Crocker, and is based strongly on a paper presented at said conference at the University of Manchester 3-5 April, 2006. I would like to thank John Hudson for detailed comments on an early version of this paper, and Nicholas Brooks for pointing out particular language problems that helped greatly to clarify key points. Janet Nelson provided some much needed encouragement.

² Dumville, *Wessex and England From Alfred to Edgar*, 147.

³ For editions and translations of Edmund's legislation, see Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachen*, and *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*.

by empowering others below them. What says "I am powerful" more than recognizing in another individual or body lower in status to your own a certain authority of his or its own in your name? The king's ability to delegate his own royal authority is an integral part of any medieval power structure, and from time to time this needed adjusting to fit new circumstances. The men to whom an Anglo-Saxon king could delegate his authority were those closest to him, his ealdormen and thegns, archbishops and bishops; the administrative structure in which they worked remains largely unknown.⁴ Ealdormen sat alongside the bishop in shire courts, levied taxation, led and organized the local *fyrð*. They also represented the king to local overlords, and these overlords to the king. This was by nature a personal relationship, but in the tenth century it was also an increasingly official one as well.

The period in question experienced considerable instability, with both secular and ecclesiastical interests vying for influence under an increasingly powerful king. While it does not endeavor to discount the roles played by secular officials, this chapter seeks to examine the role of the bishops and their relationship with the king, both as legal officials in their own diocese, and as representatives of royal authority. More generally it will address contemporary issues of local administration, and how officials may have dealt with legal proceedings at the hundred and shire level. It proposes that King Edmund may have been reinforcing elements of royal power in the person of the bishops, while at the same time promoting efficiency and institutional familiarity between the localities by

⁴ See the work of H.R. Loyn, especially "The Term Ealdorman in the Translations Prepared at the time of King Alfred", *English Historical Review* 68 (1955), 512-25, as well as "Gesiths and Thegns in Anglo-Saxon England from the Seventh to the Tenth Century", 528-49. His more broadly based effort, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500-1087* is essential reading for this subject. See also A. Thacker, "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England", *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 2 (1981), 201-36. For the tenth century specifically, the collection of essays in *Tenth-Century Studies: Essays in Commemoration of the Millennium of the Council of Winchester and Regularis Concordia*, David Parsons (ed.), (London, 1975) is exceedingly valuable; especially the essay by Loyn.

encouraging cooperation between local administrative authorities. King Edmund was the first Anglo-Saxon king to succeed to the kingship of all of Britain, and the expression of imperial pretension introduced under Athelstan was refined further by his successors. One wonders how Edmund perceived his role as king of many disparate territories still becoming accustomed to being governed as one, and how he balanced the bigger picture of his inherited English “*empire*” against the more day-to-day administration of the localities. The king cannot be everywhere at once, and in his absence it is the delegates of his authority working at the local level that had to be relied on to maintain the peace.

Recent work on Anglo-Saxon law has begun to recognize the subtle differences between active legislation, and what is coming to be known as “administrative law.” That is, the difference between *leges* that prohibit illegal behavior, and those that seem to do more to outline how the authorities responsible for keeping the peace would preside over the laws as they may have stood. Interpretation of the latter is notoriously difficult. In order to proceed the problematic course will be taken that entails probing Edmund’s codes not for what they can inform the historian about how Anglo-Saxon law was made, but what the king may have wanted his laws to accomplish in the shorter term; this will involve a close reading of the laws themselves, a chancy practice even when the utmost care is employed.⁵ At the risk of taking liberties with a gradualist reading of the laws, the use of such methodology is intended to facilitate exploration and speculation, and it is

⁵ The late Patrick Wormald’s *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century I* is essential reading and an invaluable companion in the present investigation. His excellent collection of essays found in *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience* is equally valuable. In both volumes he makes important points regarding textual history, and raises questions regarding how and why the laws have been passed down to us as they are. Perhaps most importantly he argues that the laws as we have them are of little value when attempting to determine their intended use. While there are difficulties to be overcome, this author does not wholly share Wormald’s opinion that we are unable to get at what Anglo-Saxon kings might have intended their legislation to do. Despite Anglo-Saxon kings’ desire to write themselves into the lawmaking tradition, I am proceeding on the assumption that law by its nature is not made unless current events or societal shifts necessitate its creation or adaptation.

hoped that despite a somewhat narrow approach to the evidence, the nature of Edmund's legislation permits this to a certain degree. While Edmund's codes may or may not have been promulgated in the order that modern historians have numbered them, they will be approached in the traditional order on the basis that this sequence best smoothes the progress of the arguments to come.

I Edmund and Archbishop Oda of Canterbury (941-58)

I Edmund is a relatively short decree, as Anglo-Saxon laws go, although far from the shortest; but this does not prevent substantial discussion of its provisions. It is devoid of sub-clauses, and contains only six full clauses and a prologue. I Edmund has been most closely associated with a tract concerned with episcopal details, the so-called *Chapters* of Archbishop Oda.⁶ In order to understand I Edmund and, it will be argued, much of Edmund's other legislation, it will be necessary to appreciate both the *Chapters* and their author. It has been shown in previous chapters of the present thesis that Archbishop Oda was a remarkably dynamic figure both during and after King Edmund's reign, and was intimately involved in both statecraft and royal policy. He also appears to have had a keen interest in canon law, as his own authorship shows.

Consisting of ten numbered paragraphs of relatively consistent length, the *Chapters* concern traditional issues of authority and integrity amongst the clergy; ranging from celibacy to inhibiting *girovagi*, their tone is serious and exhortatory. They were composed sometime between 942x6, as Oda identifies himself as archbishop, and also

⁶ See Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen III*, 124. Oda's *Chapters* have been edited in *Councils and Synods, With Other Documents Relating to The English Church I, A.D. 871-1204*, D. Whitelock, M. Brett and C. N. L. Brooke (eds.), (2 Vols., Oxford, 1981), 67-74 (hereafter *Councils and Synods*).

dedicates his effort to King Edmund personally in the prologue.⁷ This is significant, and may point to King Edmund's enlistment and endorsement of much of the sentiment in the Chapters. The *Chapters* are only partly Oda's own compositions, and consist mostly of an edited compilation of more than one source, some not yet identified, but mostly coming from the Legatine Councils of 786.⁸ Despite the fact that Oda's *Chapters* appear to be primarily a work of compilation rather than original composition, the themes he stresses and their connection to both I and II Edmund make it invaluable to the discussion. For while they may not be entirely Oda's original views, his excerpts (indeed, as well as what he chose not to include) from his various sources provide an oblique insight into what the archbishop had on his mind.

While the *Chapters* appear chiefly concerned with ecclesiastical observances and the proper duties of each particular class of cleric, there are hints at a more general interest in greater involvement on the part of the clergy in seemingly secular affairs. This emphasis can be seen in several of the *Chapters*, especially the second, which is concerned mainly with the duty of the king to select good councillors and to protect his subjects. The language suggests explicitly the connection between God's grace and the secular powers of law; those who are in a secular position of lawgiving are given the "the strength both to bind and to loosen" from the bishops (and the archbishop).⁹ It hints ever so slightly at dependency, but the emphasis remains one of cooperation between just judges, both secular and ecclesiastic.

⁷ Oda received his pallium in 942, and King Edmund was killed in May, 946. See *Councils and Synods*, 69.

⁸ See G. Schoebe, "The Chapter's of Archbishop Oda (942/6) and the canons of the Legatine Councils of 786", *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 35 (1962), 75-83.

⁹ "Ecclesia enim habet potestatem ligandi atque solvendi." *Councils and Synods*, 70.

According to Oda, the king's powers to delegate authority in the realm of law come from the grace meted out by God, and this relationship requires cooperation between those delegated by God, the bishops, and those delegated by the king, his ealdormen and thegns. This theme continues in the third *Chapter*, which makes it clear that not only are secular authorities inherently tied to ecclesiastic ones, but so also are ecclesiastics tied to the king and his men. It is directed expressly to the bishops, and explicitly admonishes them never to "evade by means of a stratagem" the words of a royal proclamation.¹⁰ By "royal proclamations" (*verbum veritatis predicare regi*), is Oda here referring, perhaps indirectly, to legislation? While Oda clearly means anything the king says, it appears difficult to escape at least the association, what with the emphasis on just judges and their judgments, as well as the relationship between the *Chapters* and Edmund's legislation.¹¹ This emphasis on secular and ecclesiastical cooperation is further summed up in the eighth *chapter*, in no uncertain terms, with the words: "Therefore, brothers, let concord and unity be between the bishops and the great men, and amongst all the Christian people."¹² The language of unanimity between Christians is not at all uncommon, but here again an emphasis can be observed on the duty of secular magnates and of ecclesiastics, bishops in particular, to work together for the common Christian good.

This underlining of the necessity of secular/ecclesiastic collaboration is made clear just as readily by what Oda omitted from the sources he consulted as what he chose

¹⁰ "Absque ullo timore vel adolatione cum omni fiducia verbum veritatis predicare regi, principibus populi sui, omnibus dignitatibus, et numquam veritatem subterfugere." *Councils and Synods*, 71.

¹¹ "Neminem iniuste dampnare, neminem nisi iuste excommunicare, omnibus viam salutis demonstrare." (Nobody is to judge unjustly; nobody is to excommunicate unless it is just; all are to demonstrate the paths of righteousness). *Councils and Synods*, 71.

¹² "Ideo providendum est, fraters, ut sit Concordia ut unanimitas inter episcopos et principes omnemque populum christianum." *Councils and Synods*, 73.

to include. As Whitelock observed, Oda's omissions are significant, especially those canons from the Legatine Council of 786 he chose not to highlight.¹³ They include a number of canons dealing particularly with more exclusively ecclesiastical topics. For instance, injunctions on costume¹⁴, baptismal rights and the necessity of knowing the paternoster and creed¹⁵, and the exclusion of illegitimate children from receiving any inheritance were ignored.¹⁶ Neither did Oda choose to include in his *Chapters* any discussion of the necessity of the vigorous prohibition of heathenism found in the third and the nineteenth canons.¹⁷

They are all very specific injunctions, and all would have been dealt with solely by ecclesiastics in a decidedly spiritual context. They naturally would have had no place in a document calculated to emphasize the necessity of secular/ecclesiastic cooperation. Oda does not seem to have been keen on highlighting those particular canons dealing with matters that might be considered more exclusively secular in nature, either. Reference to the twelfth canon, which deals with the election of kings and the crime of regicide, is absent in what Whitelock identifies as an ironic twist, considering Edmund's violent death at the hands of the thief Liofa. That aside, it is important that within the *Chapters* the king is only mentioned in the context of his duty generally to protect the church and surround himself with prudent councilors, givers of just judgments.¹⁸ The

¹³ The following discussion is taken from Whitelock's introduction to Oda's *Chapters*, in *Councils and Synods*, 68, and conclusions have been drawn from her observations. The Legatine Decrees themselves are found in *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland III*, A. W. Haddan and W. Stubbs (eds.), (Oxford, 1871), 447-62 (hereafter *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents III*).

¹⁴ Canon 4; *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents III*, 450.

¹⁵ Canon 2; *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents III*, 448-9.

¹⁶ Canon 16; *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents III*, 455-6.

¹⁷ *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents III*, 449-50 and 458-9.

¹⁸ See especially the second *Chapter*; "Secundo capitulo ammonemus regem et principes et omnes, qui in potestate sunt, ut cum magna humilitate suis archiepiscopis omnibusque aliis episcopis obedient, quia illis claves regni celorum date sunt et habent potestatem ligandi atque solvendi; nec se magni pendant in

Chapters' secular interest lies with those councilors, the king's delegates and not the king himself. One wonders if this emphasis has anything to do with King Edmund's relatively young age.

Perhaps the most significant visible exclusion is Oda's disregard of a key element of the tenth canon, which specifically prohibits bishops from attending secular councils.¹⁹ If the above interpretation is accepted, any reference to this provision would have essentially negated the entire purpose behind the *Chapters*. The 786 Legatine Decrees and Oda's *Chapters* both stress concord within Christian society, but Oda has tailored many of the earlier pronouncements so as to fit more appropriately into a context of cooperation between the secular and the ecclesiastic roles in the application of law and governance.²⁰ The stressing of the bishop's function in relation to the secular world and his relationship with the king's councilors, as opposed to the king himself, is suggestive of the archbishop's own interest in the bishop's role in local legal administration.

Now that the reasoning and the mindset behind Oda's *Chapters* have been addressed, one is in an improved position to discuss the law code known as I Edmund. Archbishop Oda is mentioned prominently in the prologue to I Edmund, and as Wormald has said, it does indeed seem as if the code was "an attempt to put the impetus of

seculari potentia, quia Deus superbis resistit, humilibus dat gratiam. Habeatque rex prudentes consiliarios, Deum timentes super regni negotia, ut populus, bonis exemplis regis et principum eruditus, proficiat in laudem et gloriam Dei." (In the second chapter we suggest to the king and his princes and his men, who are with strength, that they be obedient with great humility to their archbishop and to all of their bishops, because those who have been given the keys to the kingdom of heaven have the strength both to bind and to loosen; for God gives grace to he who meters out secular power with humility, and not to he who resists God with arrogance. And the king should have prudent councillors, fearing god above the business of the realm, so that the people, being instructed by the good example of the king and his great men, might accomplish much in the praise and the glory of God) *Councils and Synods*, 70.

¹⁹ "Vidimus etiam ibi Episcopos in conciliis suis secularia iudicare, prohibuimusque eos voce Apostolica: 'Nemo militans Deo implicet se negotiis secularibus, ut Ei militet Cui se probavit.'" *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents* III, 452.

²⁰ See also C. Cubitt, *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c.650-c.850* (London, 1995), 189, n.143.

vernacular law behind the principles expounded by [the *Chapters*].”²¹ I Edmund appears at first glance as a bit of a hodgepodge of ecclesiastical concerns. A close reading of several of its clauses shows it to be in fact a systematic approach at delineating the rights and obligations of bishops with respect to their local spheres of administration and their responsibilities to the king. In this respect it echoes I Athelstan, which also refers to the general duties of ecclesiastics, and of bishops in particular.²²

The prologue begins by stressing the attendance of the two archbishops, Oda and Wulfstan of York. The presence of both archbishops’ names is perhaps an indication of the greater cooperation (or at the very least a hope of greater cooperation) at all levels of the church and state espoused by the *Chapters*. It also allows some possible precision as to the date of I Edmund’s promulgation. Archbishop Wulfstan only appears to have witnessed King Edmund’s diplomas during 942 and between 944x6, so it is possible that I Edmund was promulgated later in the king’s reign as opposed to earlier.²³ The first clause is primarily concerned with those in holy orders and their behaviour. It echoes much of the more general theme of setting good example found in the *Chapters*, and even goes so far as to prescribe a punishment “which is ordained in the canon”, perhaps an overt reference to the Legatine Decrees themselves.²⁴

²¹ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 310.

²² The prologue of I Athelstan also speaks of reeves and of ealdormen, but lays special emphasis on bishops and their own property. See *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 123.

²³ The attestations of bishops and other ecclesiastics in King Edmund’s charters are extremely regular, and assigning one particular meeting as being associated with the promulgation of legislation is nigh impossible.

²⁴ “*þæs wyrðe þe on ðam canone cweð*”. *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 6 and 295. This is in contradiction of Liebermann’s belief that the punishment metered out was, in fact, not according to canon law (Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachen III*, 125); see also Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 310, n.215.

In the third clause is the novel statement that, “If anyone sheds the blood of a Christian man, he shall not come to the king’s neighbourhood²⁵ until he proceeds to do penance, as the bishop appoints for him or his confessor directs him.”²⁶ William Cheney considered the significance of this clause as relating directly to the king himself, and he highlighted its parallels to the sanctity of the pagan Germanic ruler-cult.²⁷ Whether or not this association is still tenable, Cheney does agree, as does the present author, with Whitelock’s ascribing the law to part of the “movement to emphasize the sanctity of kingship discernable in other texts in this century.”²⁸ These are important points to make, but there is more. As Cheney correctly observes, it is now the case that the mediation of the bishop is necessary for one “polluted” by the crime of homicide to approach the king.²⁹ In actual practice, this would have placed great discretionary powers in the hands

²⁵ My translation. While Robertson translated *neawiste* as “anywhere near the king”, “neighbourhood” is clearly preferable.

²⁶ “Gif hwa Cristenes mannes blód ageote, ne cume he na on ðæs cyninges neawiste, ær he on dædbote ga, swa him biscop tæce 7 his scrift him wisige” (*Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 6-7). Liebermann felt that the mention of the bishop by name indicated that a high-ranking member of society, such as a king’s thegn, was meant. He based this on the inclusion of a few extra words in one of the manuscripts containing Edmund’s law codes (Corpus Christi College Cambridge 383), which suggest that the stipulation was drawn up with precisely the kings’ own retainers in mind. He felt that this addition, which reads, “if he be the king’s man” (*gyf he cyninges man sy*), exemplified the code’s actual meaning, and helped to clarify it (Liebermann, *Die Gesetze der Angelsachen III*, 125). Robertson joined him in this view (*Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 295-6, n.3 and 296, n.4). Wormald however has since shown the phrase to be a scribal addition to the text, possibly an error or, as is more likely, a later gloss. His investigation of CCCC 383 shows that there are a surprising number of slight (and indeed, not so slight) errors and emendations to be found within it (*The Making of English Law*, 228-36 and 308-9). These range from the simple to the egregious, and he feels that the irregularity of the additions found in CCCC 383 reflects a glossing rather than the original language of the code (*The Making of English Law*, 309, n. 205).

²⁷ William A. Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity* (Manchester, 1970), 213-17.

²⁸ Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, 217; see also *EHD* 332.

²⁹ Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, 218-19. Chaney goes on to say that, “Thus the right of asylum is upheld, and the royal protector loses none of his prerogatives, but the peculiar character of the Anglo-Saxon king has been reasserted as sacral and not to be defiled by one ritually unclean—unshriven or excommunicated, in the terminology of the new court-religion.” This is after a comparison between I-II Edmund and a later law, VI Æthelred 36, which speaks in the same terms of Edmund’s restriction, with the important addition of bars against “those who secretly compass death,” *morðwyrhtan*. It is therefore interesting to note the very similar warnings against witchcraft and magic found in Oda’s ninth *Chapter*.

of a bishop presented with a submissive criminal, one willing to do penance.

Furthermore, one could interpret this clause's emphasis on proper channels as an attempt to prevent a killer from going over the head of the local bishop to appeal directly to the king's own personal justice. While this provision seemingly applies only to a particular crime, it resonates with Wormald's comment that the Anglo-Saxons had the rather pronounced habit of "over-hasty resort to the king".³⁰

Through this clause the king retains his rights to administer his own personal justice undiminished, while at the same time reinforcing the notion of communication between the king and the bishops in serious legal matters. Cooperation remains the overriding principle, but it is cooperation that provides both the king and the bishops their own measure of authority. The clause appears to force any murderer to rely first on the bishop before appealing further afield; its concern seems to include the separation of the king from the trouble of having to deal with the dregs of society personally, while reinforcing the authority of the bishop in his diocese. The bishop's power is essentially the king's here; royal authority is at work through the bishops, who enjoy the similar but not necessarily unequal authority from God. Even if this clause is read in strictly ideological terms, the relationship between the king and the bishop is laid bare. The bishop's actual power may have been unchanged, but the king, as well as God, now explicitly endorsed whatever authority in this sort of case they previously possessed.

After the fourth clause, which is a general admonition against adultery and intercourse with nuns, comes a directive aimed at the bishops themselves. I Edmund 5 concerns the maintenance of church property, and the bishop's own property in

³⁰ Wormald, *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West*, 349.

particular.³¹ It has been interpreted as both an exhortation to keep individual churches in general good standing with the *corpus ecclesiarum* by Liebermann³², and Robertson put forth the possibility that the basic upkeep of church buildings, perhaps those that had fallen into disrepair during the course of the Danish wars, in particular were meant.³³ While Liebermann's interpretation might be preferred in this instance, the present interest lies with the fact that it places the responsibility, and therefore the personal authority of the bishop himself at the fore. In addition to making it clear that bishops are to take an active role in the upkeep of their churches (in whichever sense upkeep is meant), they are also to, "exhort the king that all God's churches be well put in order, as we have much need [that they be]."³⁴

In conjunction with the third clause a developing theme can be observed in I Edmund, that of the empowerment of the bishop as a direct (perhaps *the* direct) intercessory between the king and his folk in certain matters of justice and of religious well being. While it is clearly evidence of what Chaney observes in the context of "the Anglo-Saxon kingdom under God...led in this world through law on its path to salvation by a king working with the Church and the "deputies of Christ" within it",³⁵ it also shows a great concern with the proper duties and the hierarchy of responsibility between the king and his "deputies", the bishops. Bishops are being reminded that, at least in part, the

³¹ "Likewise we have ordained that every bishop shall restore the houses of God on his own property, and also exhort the king that all God's churches be well put in order, as we have much need [that they be]." ([Be cyricena gebetunge.] Eac we gecwædon, þæt ælc biscop béte Godes hus on his agenum, 7 eac þone cyningc minegige, þæt ealle Godes cirican syn wel behworfene, swa us micel þearf is). *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 6-7.

³² Based on his translation, and explicated by Robertson in *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 296.

³³ Robertson also notes that Archbishop Oda is said to have been actively involved in the rebuilding of Canterbury Cathedral; see *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 296, and the *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, 222-23, and the *Vita Sancti Odonis*, 24-5.

³⁴ *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 6-7.

³⁵ Chaney, *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England*, 220.

king delegates their authority. One can observe in I Edmund not only an interest in reaffirming the enthroned royal dignity, but also a concern with maintaining the local authority of the king's delegates within their own local context. Part and parcel of this would appear to be the bishops' role in promoting a majestic view of royal authority by carrying out their own local business in the king's name; by working together, the king and the bishops reinforce the authority of the other.

There are further possible implications. The themes addressed above could also be suggestive of a power disparity between ecclesiastics and secular officials regarding the regulation of legal matters independent of the king himself. A comparative reading of Oda's *Chapters* supports this, and the legal emphasis on cooperation and increased involvement on the part of bishops within their diocese might hint at a desire for balance between the respective spheres of legal officials. As has been seen in chapter four of the present argument, King Edmund may have been relying increasingly heavily on his great secular magnates for administrative help, as his close alliance with Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King' and other powerful families suggests. Their relationship appears to have been significantly augmented around the year 943, and if I Edmund may be tentatively dated to c.944x6, it may be interpreted at least in part as reflecting ecclesiastical concerns for the administration of the realm. This might not be taken too far, as the emphasis on property is also prominent; but it may be a sign of an increased awareness that bishops could have a powerful influence on legal proceedings, and especially so when property was involved.³⁶

³⁶ It was after all Archbishop Oda's protégés and partners in the Benedictine reform movement, Dunstan and especially Æthelwold, who proved so instrumental in the acquisition and retention of lands in the decades that followed King Edmund's reign. See Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century", 65-88.

This general interpretation of I Edmund therefore suggests at the same time an elevation of the status of the king at the highest level of society and the church, as well as an intensification of the powers of the bishop at the more local, diocesan level. While the bishops' authority appears amplified and possibly extended, it is exclusively at the lower levels of legal administration, within their own districts as opposed to the administration of the kingdom as a larger concept. The impression is one of a royal personality not looking to be disturbed by matters that could be more easily dealt with by the local authorities; King Edmund did, after all, have a burgeoning empire to run. It is with these issues in mind that what was perhaps Edmund's most innovative piece of legislation, his ordinance on feud should be approached.

II Edmund, *Wergeld*, and the Politics of the *Mund*

Throughout the history of Anglo-Saxon England, even the briefest glance will show that the feud was a major concern. What was at its heart, an essentially local matter, often had the potential to reach epic proportions, and could end up affecting far more than just the original kin groups involved.³⁷ Indeed, it is likely that behind the royal succession in both Northumbria and Wessex lay many untold conflicts that could be best described as feud oriented, as a recent article has suggested. King Edmund's second code is at its most basic an attempt at royal regulation of the blood feud, but it is so much more than that as well. The concepts introduced in the code exhibit a further move towards the elevation of the status of the king in the administration of law, but in such a way as to further separate the concept of his personal justice from the responsibilities delegated to local officials in I Edmund, and vice versa. Wormald is accurate in his assertion that II

³⁷ See Paul R. Hyams, "Feud in Medieval England", *Haskins Society Journal* 3 (1991), 1-21.

Edmund was designed to apply the ideological stance taken in I Edmund to a more specialized arena of justice, but he does not, in the present author's opinion, put enough stress on the concept of the king's *mund*, the special protection of the Crown.³⁸ It is the qualification of the king's *mund* that sets this particular law apart, and helps one better to understand it in relation to the rest of King Edmund's legislation.

The ordinance on feud begins with the first person plural voice, and the informal language belies the seriousness of the code.³⁹ When reading the prologue and its sub clause one gets the impression that the thought processes behind the code seem to take on a logical progression, suggesting that quite a bit of planning and careful thought went into its composition. In relation to King Edmund's other laws, it appears more mature, more carefully and rationally thought-out than any other.⁴⁰ The first clause gets straight to the point, laying down what amounts to an "out clause" should a killing occur. It effectively isolates any slayer by making him alone the bearer of the vendetta. It asserts that as long as one follows the rules by having friends and kin aid in the payment of the *wergeld*, and the *wergeld* is paid in full and in due time, all will be well.⁴¹

³⁸ II Edmund is unique also in its relationship to the peculiar tract known as *Wergeld*, an anonymous code, which it closely parallels. Wormald has shown that they share much of the same language, and in such an order, that the conclusion that they are simply differently worded versions of the same pronouncement becomes inescapable; see *The Making of English Law*, 374-8.

³⁹ The style is decidedly personal in nature, a feature Wormald notices as being rather novel in Anglo-Saxon law; see *The Making of English Law*, 311.

⁴⁰ The prologue gives, as a whole, the notion that this law was not one composed by an ecclesiastic, but reflects closely the actual words of the king. Take for example the passage, "First, then, it seemed to us all most necessary that we should keep most firmly our peace and concord among ourselves throughout my dominion. The Illegal and manifold conflicts which take place among us distress me and all of us greatly. We decreed then:" (*EHD*, 391). Whitelock's translation of II Edmund is to be preferred to Robertson's, but the original is taken from his edition. (Ðonne ðuhte us ærest mæst ðearf, þæt we ure gesibsumnesse 7 geþwærnesse fæstlicost us betweenan heoldan gynd ealne minne anwald. Me egleð swyðe y us eallum ða unrihtlican 7 mænigfealdan gefeoht ðe betwux us sylfum syndun: ðonne cwæde we:). *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 8-9.

⁴¹ *EHD*, 392.

The ifs and buts come in the sub-clauses, which make provision for what will happen should a killer not be supported by his kin. The three sub-clauses call on families to not cheat the system by giving them the option to avoid both the possible economic hardship and the possibility of being included in the legitimate feud. So, a kindred could either throw their lot in with the homicide, or avoid the whole mess altogether.⁴² The second sub-clause even makes provision for the possibility of a single member of a kin group attempting to flaunt the law by aiding the murderer, in defiance one would imagine, of the rest of the family. II Edmund effectively sets this individual outside the law along with the murderer, without including the rest of the kin.⁴³ This is the first key penalty laid down, and it is a harsh one; inclusion in the vendetta, and royal confiscation of all he owns. It sets forward almost as if it were designed as a social regulation, protecting the larger part of a kindred from the rogue actions of a single member.

The second clause prohibits any breach of the sanctity of sanctuary. It forbids any harm to be visited upon a criminal seeking ecclesiastical or royal sanctuary, and the emphasis is on violence done within the protected area of a church or a royal burh. One is tempted to give this clause little more than a cursory glance, but it may be worthwhile to treat it and the third sub-clause of the first as closely related. They both draw heavily on previous legislation: II Edmund 1.3 from II Athelstan 20.7, and II Edmund 2 from Alfred 2 and 40.⁴⁴ In each case the crime is described in virtually the same way, but Edmund's law has tacked on the additional penalty of outlawry and loss of property into the king's hands.

⁴² *EHD*, 392.

⁴³ II Edmund 1.3. See *EHD*, 392.

⁴⁴ *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 296.

The enhanced penalties and the language used in these two stipulations strongly resembles King Athelstan's codes, in that they stress the sole right of the king to pronounce guilt and collect the entirety of the profits of said justice. This stress on royal privilege is continued in the third clause of II Edmund, in which the king declares, "And I do not wish that any fine for fighting or compensation to a lord for his man shall be remitted."⁴⁵ The tone is noticeably more forceful. H.R. Loyn noticed this imposition on the right of the kin by the king, and his observation that "a higher authority was present" is highly relevant here.⁴⁶ The law highlights and employs Edmund's own royal prerogative just as much as it attempts to suppress the rights of the kindred to settle their own scores with unsupervised, by its very nature unpredictable and therefore dangerous, violence.⁴⁷ The fourth clause bears a close relationship to I Edmund 3, in that it appears to repeat and clarify the provision excluding a slayer from coming straight to the king for justice (see above). III Edmund 4 states,

Further, I make it known that I will allow no resort to my court before he [the slayer] has undergone ecclesiastical penance and paid compensation to the kindred, [or] undertaken to pay it, and submitted to every legal obligation, as the bishop, in whose diocese it is, instructs him.⁴⁸

The clause emphasizes the position of the bishop specifically in his diocese, his authority to pronounce legal penalties, and the local rights of the kin to receive proper reparation. Here King Edmund reiterates the separation of his person from the homicide, and places the authority of the bishop as a criminal's first step towards legality; a criminal may no

⁴⁵ *EHD*, 392. "7 ic nelle þæt ænig fyhtwite oððe manbot forgifen sy." *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 9.

⁴⁶ See H.R. Loyn, "Kinship in Anglo-Saxon England", *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1973), 197-210, at 203.

⁴⁷ For a slightly different reading, see Paul Hyams, "Feud and the State in Late Anglo-Saxon England", *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001), 1-43, at 14-17.

⁴⁸ "Eac ic cyðe, þæt ic nelle socne habban [þone ðe mannes blod geote] to minum hirede, ær he hebbe g[od]cunde bote underfangen 7 wið mægðe gebet – on bote befangen – 7 to ælcum rihte gebogen, swa biscop him tæce ðe hit on his scyre sy." *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Edgar*, 10-11. See also Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 310-11.

longer appeal directly to the king if the local authorities did not see things his way.⁴⁹

This example makes explicit the role of the bishop as both a partition between an individual and the king's personal justice, and as a powerful entity in the local context of the legal system. The bishop is doing the king's work for him, and it is in the king's name that the bishop acts. What is of additional interest is the balance it strikes when compared with the preceding three clauses. Whereas these earlier clauses stress royal prerogative in the punishment of criminals, II Edmund 4 extends and clarifies the relatively novel concept of the king as being isolated from those contaminated by crime, and re-affirms the more local rights of bishops to prescribe penance and punishments as they saw fit. King Edmund seems to continue stressing his own royal authority as much as he can, while keeping a mind to maintain the degree of local power provisioned for in his other pieces of legislation.

II Edmund 5, 6 and 7 stand in sharp contrast to the opening clauses of the code. These particular clauses closely resemble the unofficial legal tract known as *Wergeld*, and as Wormald has remarked, appear "out of place."⁵⁰ The break in subject is matched by the change in tone. The fifth clause is essentially a personal "thank you" to those who have given their support in the suppression of thefts, and also appears to entreat all concerned to support the provisions put forth. What is odd is that this clause appears in the middle of the code as a whole. This is what leads Wormald to suggest that it possibly represents an additional text that was added on to the tail end of II Edmund.⁵¹

⁴⁹ See above, page 174.

⁵⁰ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 377.

⁵¹ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 311 and 377. In addition to the sudden shift of focus and theme, there are also textual peculiarities. In two manuscripts, the *Textus Roffensis* and CCC 383, Wormald has noticed the prominence of unusually oversized initials at this point, and that this may be a sign of a new text.

While he discounts this prospect, his suggestion could be given a second glance.

In addition to the textual abnormalities noticed by Wormald, there is a noticeable difference in originality. The first five clauses all draw on and copy from earlier legislation, including Ine, Alfred, Athelstan, and I Edmund.⁵² In the two final clauses of II Edmund there are no direct visible connections with any earlier Anglo-Saxon law code, and the provisions are decidedly innovative in their content. Perhaps the most important novelty is in the sixth clause, where the introduction of two new terms to Anglo-Saxon law is found, *mundbryce* and *hamsocnum*. *Mundbryce* refers to the king's own special protection (*mund*), not a new legal concept in any sense;⁵³ and while the new term was seemingly introduced to specify the breaking of said special peace, its inclusion in the laws here alongside the second new term is significant. *Hamsocnum* refers to housebreaking, and its literal translation equates to "attack on a homestead."

Perhaps most important is the fact that *hamsocnum* appears to be a Scandinavian loan word, most probably derived from the ON *heimsókn*.⁵⁴ Anglo-Saxon historians are by no means strangers to the many Scandinavianisms found in the primary sources, and while they remain relatively uncommon, they often come as little surprise. One should, however, perhaps take slightly more notice when they appear in concentrated number within a certain text. Edmund's first and third codes show no evidence of Scandinavian loan words, but his second code contains no fewer than three, and all of these are found in the sixth and seventh clauses. The other two include *sectan*, from the ON *sætta* ("to

⁵² See *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 296-7.

⁵³ See Ine 6, Alfred 7 and 39-40, in *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 38-9, 68-9 and 80-3.

⁵⁴ *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 297.

make peace among”), and *grið*, meaning peace generally, or more specifically *localized* peace, such as sanctuary or truce.⁵⁵

As suggested above, the establishment of the king’s *mund* was the driving concept behind the code as a whole, and it is in the sixth and seventh clauses where the term is applied and more fully defined. It is perhaps no coincidence then that this prevalence of Scandinavian legal terms is seen to be suddenly thrust alongside the provisions defining what constituted the initiation of the king’s special protection, and what was subject to the king’s authority once it had been established in a particular case. It is entirely possible that this density of loan words in the final clauses is indicative of an effort to make the concepts of the *mund* more approachable to a group or locality that might not be familiar with the conditions involved. Approached in this context, II Edmund appears as having plausibly been composed with a Scandinavian speaking audience at least partly in mind.

One assumption could be that individuals well versed in Scandinavian languages directly influenced these clauses of II Edmund, and it is hardly a stretch to suggest that Archbishop Oda, and possibly Archbishop Wulfstan were amongst them.⁵⁶ If this is accepted, then it is unproblematic to recommend that II Edmund was promulgated sometime soon after King Edmund recaptured the area of the Five Boroughs in 942.⁵⁷ The pagan-Norse who ruled Northumbria previously had effectively dominated the Christian-Danish inhabitants of these areas, and upon their absorption back into English

⁵⁵ Robertson identifies the possibility of a fourth in the inclusion of *hand*, which possibly relates closely with *handsal*, an Old Norse legal term relating to a sincere promise (*Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 297).

⁵⁶ Oda was of Danish ancestry (see Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 222-37), and Wulfstan must have been fluent in multiple Scandinavian languages.

⁵⁷ Wormald hinted at this in *The Making of English Law*, 441.

control would have obliged the re-introduction of West Saxon style administration. Whitelock touched on this, and her suggestion that II Edmund was “part of an attempt to secure greater uniformity over the various parts of the kingdom”, as well as being connected with “the division of the midlands into shires during the [tenth] century” strikes a chord with the interpretation of III Edmund and the Hundred Ordinance, as shall be seen below.⁵⁸ It also corresponds well with what has been shown in chapter four, that after c.943 King Edmund’s administrative energy was at its peak.

The close relationship between the final clauses of II Edmund and the anonymous tract known as *Wergeld* could be seen as lending assistance to this view. Wormald has shown unequivocally that the tract provides an expanded reading of the seventh clause of II Edmund, with the majority of the added details being related to the proper modes of payment.⁵⁹ In essence it is an elaborative section serving to clarify the points laid down by II Edmund’s final clauses. The implication inferred by its sheer existence is that clarification may have been needed in the first place, a point which reinforces the probability that the concepts being introduced might have been met with some confusion, due perhaps either to their novelty and/or complexity, or their reception by those who were unfamiliar with such concepts. The unofficial nature of *Wergeld* serves to underpin the suggestion that there was a degree of circumscribed analysis and elaboration being exercised by those who were charged with interpreting and administering the law in the localities.⁶⁰ If *Wergeld* is to be considered even remotely contemporary with II Edmund,

⁵⁸ *EHD*, 333.

⁵⁹ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 377. See Also Hyams, “Feud and the State in Late Anglo-Saxon England”, 15-16.

⁶⁰ “*Wergeld* comes out of all this looking like an unofficial treatise inspired by royal legislation.” Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 377.

and it almost certainly is, then it is possibly evidence of increased local interpretation of official legislation. The implication is that the local powers had the ability to do so.⁶¹

II Edmund therefore emerges as a directive aimed at local officials on how to differentiate between what was to be under the aegis of local responsibility, and what circumstances were to constitute the boundaries of the king's own special protection, his *mund*. In one sense it acts to clarify certain themes set forth in his other laws by delineating the powers of local authorities in the specific terms of the feud. It also serves to further set apart the special powers of the crown by delegating authority into the hands of district officials, while reserving the right of royal interference if a case was either mishandled or the rules were flagrantly contravened. King Edmund continues to encourage more local initiative in the upholding of the law, while at the same time reaffirming his own royal dignity and authority in special circumstances. By approaching legal administration in this way, the vigor of the *Law* is enhanced at all levels, exemplified by the hierarchical distinctions and shown by the organizational structure of local and royal jurisdictions working in conjunction. There is an emphasis on increased cooperation between all ranks of the Anglo-Saxon legal system, and the parallel with the ideals espoused by Archbishop Oda's *Chapters* is marked.

III Edmund and the Hundred Ordinance

So far this chapter has relied on close readings of the legislative language found in King Edmund's first and second codes as evidence for an increased royal interest in local authority. Now the discussion will turn to two documents closely associated with local

⁶¹ A cursory glance at Table 3.1 in Wormald's *The Making of English Law*, 112-17, shows the prevalence of "unofficial" legal tracts corresponding roughly with King Edmund's reign and immediately after; while not a smoking gun in any sense, the correspondence is noteworthy.

administration in the mid-tenth century, and how they fit in with the hypothesis so far. The first can be attributed to King Edmund; the second has a more questionable pedigree. Also known as the Colyton edict, III Edmund is notable both for its reliance on traditional phrasing and themes, borrowed mostly from the laws of King Athelstan, and on its innovation in language. Wormald has noted that there is only one complete clause without obvious precedent, and the code as a whole is generally comparable to the style found in the introduction of Athelstan's fourth code.⁶² The first clause is a general admonition on personal loyalty to the king himself. A hint of time-honoured language shows itself in the famous passage stating that subjects should show their constancy by "favouring what he [the king] favours and discountenancing what he discountenances", a repetition from the laws of his father, King Edward the Elder.⁶³ Wormald has compared this oath with an earlier example found in the laws of King Alfred, but makes the point that Edmund's oath appears to have a more Carolingian flavour.⁶⁴

III Edmund is perhaps most notable for the fact that it contains the first mention of the hundred as a unit of organization in England, and the fact that its earliest reference is such a relatively late one has puzzled Anglo-Saxon scholarship for years.⁶⁵ Generally

⁶² Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 312. Indeed, the somewhat dry pronouncement that, "These are the provisions for the preservation of public peace and the swearing of allegiance which have been instituted at Colyton by King Edmund and his bishops, together with his councillors" does sound similar to the preamble to the Thunderfield edicts (*Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 12-13); Compare with, "These are the ordinances which the councilors established at Exeter by the advice of King Æthelstan, and again at Faversham, and on a third occasion at Thunderfield(?) where all these provisions were drawn up, ratified." *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 146-7.

⁶³ "...in amando quod amabit, nolendo quod nolet," (*Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 12-13). Specifically, the Exeter code; see Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 311.

⁶⁴ Wormald, *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West*, 12.

⁶⁵ III Edmund 2: "Further, it is his will, that where a man is proved to be a thief, nobles and commoners shall unite and seize him, alive or dead, whichever they can. And he who institutes a vendetta against any of those who have been concerned in that pursuit shall incur the hostility of the king and of all his friends, and if anyone shall refuse to come forward and lend his assistance, he shall pay 120 shillings to the king—or deny knowledge of the affair by an oath of equivalent value—and 30 shillings to the hundred." (Vult etiam, ut ubi fur pro certo cognoscetur, twelfhindi et twihindi consocietur et exuperent eum vivum vel

historians have noted the fact that the hundred is not attested to in the sources before King Edmund's reign, and make clear that this still does not allow one to put even a remotely accurate date to the origin of the hundred as an institution.⁶⁶ Despite these difficulties it remains highly likely that the hundred as an administrative unit originated in the first quarter of the tenth century.⁶⁷ It is not so surprising then to find its first mention in a legal context shortly thereafter; it was immature, and still being modified.

One should be careful when referring to the hundred as an institution, as there remains much that is unknown about the differences between its organization in Wessex, Mercia and the Danelaw.⁶⁸ Still, it was precisely during this period that such organization was undergoing rearrangement and reassessment, and this fact should not dissuade one from proceeding on the assumption that West Saxon kings were beginning to organize their sundry dominions in at least a similar, if not identical, fashion.⁶⁹ The best evidence for this is the undated tract known as the Hundred Ordinance.⁷⁰ It lays down the fundamental ground-rules for the holding of the local hundred courts, and makes provision for how a case might be handled should it be deemed applicable to more than one hundred's particular jurisdiction. Despite the fact that the Hundred Ordinance is

mortuum, alterutrum quod poterunt; et qui aliquem eorum infaidiabit qui in ea quaestione fuerint, sit inimicus regis et omnium amicorum eius; et si quis adire negaverit et coadjuvare nolit, emendet regi cxx s. – vel secundum hoc perneget quod nescivit – et hundreto xxx s.) *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 12-13.

⁶⁶ See Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 504-5; also Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*, 136; and Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, 248. Hart makes a compelling case for placing its creation in the time of King Edward the Elder, specifically after his military takeover of most of Mercia in 917-18; see *The Danelaw*, 281-8).

⁶⁷ See J. Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000), 16-17.

⁶⁸ See Loyn, *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England*, 119-20 and 137-40. I follow somewhat from Campbell's comment that when dealing with hundreds and wapentakes "resemblances were more important than differences" (*The Anglo-Saxon State*, 32).

⁶⁹ Such an interpretation resonates with the findings of chapter four.

⁷⁰ It has been edited both as The Hundred Ordinance, as in *EHD*, 393-4, and as I Edgar in *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 16-19. While it will be referred to here as The Hundred Ordinance, it will be cited from *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*.

one of the most datable of the anonymous Anglo-Saxon legal tracts, it remains difficult to date precisely.⁷¹ It could conceivably have been composed anytime between the reigns of King Edmund and King Edgar (939-961?).⁷² One sign that allows for some precision in its dating is found in the second clause, which states, “[a thief] shall receive his deserts as has already been decreed by Edmund.”⁷³ As Whitelock has observed, this does not inexorably lead to the conclusion that King Edmund was dead when the code was produced.⁷⁴

While the Hundred Ordinance may have borrowed from Edmund’s as well as the laws of King Edward the Elder, its wording does suggest that it was not a code of royal origin, at least in its received form. Wormald points out that both the tense of the law-making voice and the initial words found in some of the clauses suggest that it might possibly have been composed by “an informed cleric.”⁷⁵ Indeed, some of the language does tend to lean towards sounding unofficial, or at the very least modified from an earlier form.⁷⁶

The Hundred Ordinance is thus a difficult document to approach, but whether or not it was issued from the mouth of the king what is important here is its association with III Edmund. That the two earliest documents to mention and discuss the hundred as an established body can be reliably connected with King Edmund by name must have some

⁷¹ See Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 378, ns.505-6 for a brief discussion of comments made by previous editors.

⁷² *EHD*, 393.

⁷³ “do ðam ðeofe his riht, swa hit ær Eadmundes cwide wæs.” *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 16-17.

⁷⁴ *EHD*, 393. Wormald agrees somewhat, tending towards a date of production for the code closer to King Edmund’s reign, rather than one further removed (*The Making of English Law*, 378).

⁷⁵ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 378-9.

⁷⁶ The rather strange (and as yet, inadequately accounted for) provision that “A cow’s bell, a dog’s collar and a horn for blowing—each of these three shall be worth a shilling, and each is reckoned as an informer” (Hryðeres belle, hundes hoppe, blæshorn – ðissa ðreora ælc bið anes scill’ weorð; 7 ælc is melda getald) might be better understood in the context of an official code being short-handed by a concerned local civil servant. Hundred Ordinance 8, in *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 18-19.

significance. Wormald notices this as well, but perhaps his most pertinent observation is that the Hundred Ordinance could have been “drafted for, or by, any single hundred.”⁷⁷ If this was the case, and it is highly suspected, it would be a further indication of local authorities’ growing contribution to the administration and interpretation of legal proceedings.

These concerns are recognized further through an examination of what specific context the hundred, as a body⁷⁸, is mentioned in both III Edmund and the Hundred Ordinance; both codes make provision for the direct funding of the hundred from the profits of justice. In III Edmund the fine comes in the form of thirty shillings to one who refused to assist a band of united nobles and commoners seeking a known thief.⁷⁹ In the Hundred Ordinance there are multiple provisions. Thirty pence are to be paid to the hundred by the man who refused to ride with the authorities in pursuit of thieves, and double that for a second offence.⁸⁰ For a third blatant neglect of duty, half a pound was demanded.⁸¹ Also, thirty shillings were expected if someone failed to appear at the court in a timely fashion (unless he was prevented by a summons from his lord).⁸² It is significant that when the fine rises upon a second and third dereliction of one’s duty to the local authorities, the matter remains one for the locals, with the addition of the lord of the particular man in question. The king is not involved, and no fine is explicitly payable unto him personally. In fact, the only individual who owed anything to the king was the

⁷⁷ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 378.

⁷⁸ The hundred is mentioned in VI Athelstan 3, but only in the context of a group of men being counted and organized in that number. See *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 158-9. See also Ine 54 (*Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 54-5).

⁷⁹ III Edmund 2. *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 12-13.

⁸⁰ *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 16-17.

⁸¹ *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 16-17.

⁸² Hundred Ordinance 7.1. *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 18-19.

chief official of the hundred who neglected his own duty as a pursuer of thieves attempting to escape another hundred's jurisdiction.⁸³

Wormald is then, exactly right when he calls the Hundred Ordinance "part of a heavily encouraged trend towards organization of local peace initiatives."⁸⁴ In this context the Hundred Ordinance appears more like the abridgement of a piece of official royal legislation on the part of an interested entity, most likely some individual who was just the sort of local official the provisions it contained would apply to. The two codes then, III Edmund and the Hundred Ordinance, indicate the improved funding of local institutions. This observation may allow some speculation about royal ambitions for the holding of the hundred courts. By funding the hundred courts from the fines levied by local justice the king may have been attempting to promote a limited degree of administrative *self-sufficiency*.

This is careful language, and it does not mean to suggest autonomy; the evidence does not allow one to go that far. But if it is taken as a given that local royal officials needed to be reimbursed for their trouble, one might see this as a sort of streamlining. With greater local authority, officials would need in turn more resources on which to draw. By localizing, as it were, the organization and collection of fines, the king could rely on his officials to do the job of administrating their respective hundreds without troubling him significantly, as the local officials' authority to do so was in effect the

⁸³ Hundred Ordinance 5.1. *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 18-19. In this respect it bears a striking resemblance to III Edmund 3, what with both codes' interest in the boundaries and responsibilities of local officials. One wonders if this is possibly a sign of cooperation between different hundred's jurisdictions.

⁸⁴ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 378.

kings'.⁸⁵ This does not necessarily require one to assume that such practice was increasing; it could reflect the formalization of established custom.⁸⁶

Finally, later legislation may provide some evidence for changes in local administration during King Edmund's reign. It is within King Edgar's fourth code that an interesting allusion to earlier laws, specifically Edmund's is found. IV Edgar 2a states, "that in every borough and in every county I possess my royal prerogatives *as my father did*, and that my thegns keep their rank in my lifetime as they did in *my father's*" (my emphasis).⁸⁷ The only extant legislation that might plausibly be the antecedent for this statement is III Edmund 1, as Liebermann and Robertson have noted.⁸⁸ At the same time, it is entirely possible that King Edgar was not even referring to a codified list of rights at all, as the use of the phrase "lifetime" (*minum timan*) suggests a more personal rather than a formalized arrangement. Both the Hundred Ordinance and IV Edgar seem

⁸⁵ When these clauses are compared to the earlier laws of Edward the Elder and of Athelstan, it is seen that this was a policy decidedly at odds with established precedent. Take for instance the laws of Edward the Elder, specifically the first and second clauses of I Edward, II Edward Prologue §3, 2 and 7, all of which make provision for specific fines payable to the king, for "insubordination" (*oferhyrnesse*) (*Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 115-21). There is no specific mention of any fine to be paid to any local body; the king takes all. This is also visible when Athelstan's laws are examined. The emphasis on payment to the king remains, and is found in I Athelstan 5, II Athelstan 1-1.5, 3, 6-6.1 and 6.3, 20-20.2 and 22-22.1 (*Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 123-43). IV Athelstan also contains specific fines to the king, although not as many as found in the Grately code (IV Athelstan 4 and 7; *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 149-51). V Athelstan 1.2, 1.33 and 1.4, all make careful provision for payments to the king by unruly local officials (*Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 153-5), and Athelstan's lengthy sixth code issued by the London Peace Guild puts forth a few conditions for royal fines (VI Athelstan 1, 1.5, 7, 8, 8.4 and 11. *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 157-69). In these codes there are fines levied that were not payable to the king himself, but in nearly all cases the recipient(s) of the fine are either unnamed, or the sums are to go to individual plaintiffs. The overall *financial* emphasis in the laws of Edward the Elder and Athelstan is on making sure that the profits of justice end up either in the hands of the king, or those who were specifically wronged. It is not until III Edmund and the Hundred Ordinance that one first sees the channelling of fines into local administrative *bodies*.

⁸⁶ This could be interpreted as King Edmund's enabling local officials to profit from doing their job well.

⁸⁷ "to ælcere byrig 7 on ælcere scyre hæbbe ic mines cynescypes gerihta swa min fæder hæfde, 7 mine þegnas hæbben heora scipe on minum timan swa hi hæfdon on minas fæder." *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 33.

⁸⁸ *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 307. That King Edgar terms his "royal prerogatives" (*cynescypes gerihta*) in the plural may be important, and it is possible that he was referring to a more dispersed list of local royal rights laid out by his father over time, by their nature not readily evidenced within the text of a single code.

to touch on privileges from the reign of King Edmund (at the very least in the case of IV Edgar, established yet unspecified royal rights), which dealt specifically with issues of royal authority in the hands of the king himself, and authority held by his thegns, by its nature delegated directly from the king.

It is significant that Edgar speaks specifically of his father's rights and privileges, and not of those of his predecessors in general. Edgar does not say that he is to enjoy those rights enjoyed by either of his uncles, King Athelstan or King Eadred; he does not say that these rights were enjoyed by his father's father, or suggest that the rights of which he speaks were ancient ones. What Edgar seemingly has in mind is a list of prerogatives that he dates specifically to the reign of King Edmund. There is no shortage of references to prior legislation and indeed specific references to previous monarchs in the corpus of Anglo-Saxon law, but this is the only instance that the present author has found that speaks specifically of royal rights previously held; this goes beyond legal-speak.⁸⁹ As the majority of these references are to more abstract themes and the spirit of legislation in general, with phrases reminiscent of influences from the past rather than specific codes, Edgar's reference to the rights of his father are somewhat set apart.⁹⁰

This may appear to fly in the face of an interpretation of King Edmund's legislation as partly an exercise in strengthening local authority, but it must be

⁸⁹ This list is long. See Ine's Prologue; "with the advice and instruction of Cenred, my father" (*Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 36-7), and the famous reference to Ine in Alfred's Prologue (*Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 62-3), as well as the Prologue to II Edward, where the king speaks of his own "previous orders" (*Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 118-19). Athelstan followed this practice of referencing his own laws, and these are well known. The laws of Æthelred II are rife with allusions to the legislation of his ancestors, and even mentions King Athelstan, King Edmund, and King Edgar (in the latter's case twice) by name (see III Æthelred 1, V Æthelred 15, VII Æthelred 1 and 4.2, and VIII Æthelred 7, 37 and 43 (*Laws of the Kings of England*, 64-5, 84-5, 108-13, 120-1 and 126-9). Similar references can be found in the laws of Cnut, specifically in his dated proclamations (Cnut 1020, 13; Cnut 1027, 16) and II Cnut 18 (*Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 142-3, 152-3 and 182-3), but he also omits Edgar's name.

⁹⁰ A notable exception is VIII Æthelred 7, which refers to a specific law of Edgar. See *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 120-1.

remembered that he was still king; and as the prologue to his third code attests, he was very much concerned with proper channels of allegiance and royal dignity. The two themes, then, local self-sufficiency and authority combined with increased funding as found in III Edmund and the Hundred Ordinance, and the allusions to royal prerogatives at the local level found in IV Edgar are not irreconcilable. They reflect the same sort of themes observable in I and II Edmund; that is, the promotion of stability and harmony between royal authority and local control through the endorsement of the two concepts as being virtually indistinguishable.

Conclusions

The nature of the Anglo-Saxon *leges* as we have them resist a definitive appraisal, and it must be remembered that this likely reflects how contemporaries thought of them as well. While the above interpretation remains but one reading, it has attempted to show that for all the seeming diversity found in King Edmund's legislation there are observable threads of logical expression that tie the three codes together. Edmund was not wholly innovative; in King Athelstan's Grately code and the unofficial tracts associated with it are observed the beginnings of an emphasis on what Wormald called the "action by those locally entrusted with law enforcement and its rewards."⁹¹ VI Athelstan as well appears greatly concerned with local peace guilds.⁹² But King Edmund was acquainted with the movement towards local control that had been developing in the localities, and perhaps both he and King Athelstan were resolved to co-opt it. The innovation behind the explicit

⁹¹ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 379; for discussion of II Athelstan and the associated tracts, see further, 172-8 and 366-79.

⁹² See *Laws of the Earliest English Kings*, 156-69.

funding of local administrative institutions and the greater empowerment of local officials in the application of the law can be seen in a more appropriate context.

King Edmund's legislation appears to have been consolidating a great deal of local authority into the hands of his bishops, insofar as their responsibilities as judges of legal cases went, and recognizing their authority within their diocese. It was the king's own royal authority at work through his delegates, working in his name; locals gained (or retained) influence, but it was reinforced as the king's, not theirs. At the same time one can see the promotion of royal authority with an increased profile, in the form of a more formal separation from the more day-to-day administration of local legal proceedings combined with an enhanced sacral identity, promoted no doubt by the king's empowered ecclesiastical delegates. Edmund makes this abundantly clear when he separates himself from a homicide in terms associated with sanctified kingship; he was above the routine, and it was the problem of the local authority to deal with. The buck still stopped at the king, but the bishop was now expected to shortstop it in certain instances.

There may be points of comparison with the empowerment of the *missi* by Charlemagne in his later years. Rosamond McKitterick has suggested that as Charlemagne became more comfortable in his position as emperor after 801, his legislation began to emphasize the role of his *missi* as representatives of his royal authority; a king growing tired of constant peregrinations around his kingdom, willing to let his delegates do more of the local administrative labour.⁹³ There may also be suggestions that Archbishop Oda was mimicking this Carolingian approach, as much of the 802 capitularies emphasize the importance of officials knowing the law and judging

⁹³ McKitterick (2007, Forthcoming). See also Wormald's comments on Charlemagne's capitularies' emphasis on administrative efficiency and imperial pretension in *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West*, 29-30.

justly, themes stressed in both I Edmund and Oda's *Chapters*. Wormald often stressed the Carolingians' influence on King Edmund's legislation, and such a comparison may lend weight to his many observations.⁹⁴

It was the careful and prescribed manipulation of royal resources that allowed a king to maintain his grip on the various local administrative regions under his control. In the mid-tenth century Anglo-Saxon royal resources were waxing, and King Edmund needed no small number of officials to keep the peace in the localities in his name. In the context of a relatively recently integrated kingdom, these officials had to be not only conscious of the central royal authority, but increasingly flexible in the localities as well. It is perhaps no coincidence that it is during and immediately after King Edmund's reign that one observes the rise of the great local aristocratic families with close ties to the royal family, such as those of Ealdormen Ealhhelm and Ælfhere in Mercia, and Æthelstan 'Half-King' in East Anglia.⁹⁵

But the king's primary secular delegates could be everywhere at once just as easily as kings; kings needed the cooperation of the religious sphere in order to keep the peace in the localities. It is not until the legislation of King Edgar that one witnesses the explicit presence at the shire court of both the bishop and the ealdorman working in concert in the judging of legal cases.⁹⁶ Historians since Chadwick have assumed that it was not until this point that such provisions were formally acknowledged, and Wormald's study of Anglo-Saxon lawsuits reinforces the suggestion that the mid-tenth

⁹⁴ See *The Making of English Law*, 310-11, and *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West*, 337-40.

⁹⁵ See Williams, '*Princeps merciorum gentis*', 143-172; and Hart, *The Danelaw*, 569-604.

⁹⁶ III Edgar 5:2. See *Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 26-7.

century was when the shire court took on an expanded role.⁹⁷ Legislation prior to King Edgar's had not formally required the bishops and ealdormen to sit side by side in each shire court, and Edgar's provision that they do so rightly stands apart as a watershed; but the preceding argument suggests that the role played by those legislating immediately before should be revisited, even if the issues addressed are reflections of a king "defining more precisely what men had previously taken for granted."⁹⁸ Edmund's reign was also the nascent period for what would become the Benedictine reform movement, which itself ushered in a period of exceptional cooperation between the religious and secular domains. Archbishop Oda was the elder statesman of this movement, and he clearly recognized the need for direct mutual aid between ecclesiastics and secular officials under an increasingly strong king; King Edmund's legislation may have been attempting to promote just this.

⁹⁷ See Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, 223; Carl Stevenson, "The Anglo-Saxon Borough", *English Historical Review* 45, no. 178 (April, 1930), 177-207, at 200; and Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 152, and especially *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West*, 284-5 and 346-7, n.48.

⁹⁸ Hyams, "Feud and the State in Late Anglo-Saxon England", 14.

Chapter VI:

An Anglo-Saxon Matriarch?

Eadgifu, Royal Marriage Policy, and ‘English’ Unity

King Edmund’s first and second wives, Ælfgifu and Æthelflæd, as well as his mother Eadgifu were important figures before, during and after his reign, especially so in the case of his mother.¹ Their respective relationships with the king, as well as with each other, are a potential source of enlightenment into some of the more murky aspects of Edmund’s short reign. A close examination of those with whom King Edmund must surely have had a decidedly personal relationship should shed light upon certain aspects of both his personality and the political situation during and after his reign.

St Ælfgifu, Æthelflæd of Damerham, and queen mother Eadgifu each played a distinctly different role in King Edmund’s life, and as such each deserves individual attention. This chapter will therefore be divided into sections dealing with each of them in turn. However, an emphasis on interconnectivity will permeate the discussion, as their roles as wives, mothers, and queens could often overlap. The principal women in King Edmund’s life were not tied to each other through him alone. As will be made clear, they had ambitions, familial and political alliances, and ambiguous religious inclinations that can appear to be at times both shared and

¹ The past few decades have seen great growth in the corpus of scholarly investigations into the shadowy world of medieval royal women. Pauline Stafford is widely recognized as one of the foremost historians of medieval women, having focused her attention not only on Anglo-Saxon England but on the Continent as well. Her work is of the utmost importance to this study. See especially “The King’s Wife in Wessex 800-1066”; *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King’s Wife in the Early Middle Ages*; *Queen Emma & Queen Edith: Queenship and Women’s Power in Eleventh-Century England* (Badmin, 1997); and “Queens, Nunneries, and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh- Century England”. See also C.R. Hart, “Two Queens of England” *Ampleforth Journal* 82 (1977), 10-15; Janet L. Nelson, “Reconstructing a Royal Family: Reflections on Alfred, From Asser, chapter 2”, *People and Places in Northern Europe 500-1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*, Ian Wood and Niels Lund (eds.), (Woodbridge, 1991), 47-66; and Henrietta Leyser, *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450-1500* (London, 1996).

conflicting between them. It will be demonstrated that Eadgifu carefully controlled King Edmund's wives not only while they were married, but also continued to exercise power over the royal marriage policy for her offspring for many years after King Edmund's own death. It will be argued that Eadgifu acted as a sort of English matriarch over the issue of the royal succession, and that this was an essential part of the royal family's influence in maintaining comfortable relations between Wessex and Mercia during the mid-tenth-century. Furthermore, the chapter will propose that alliances between distinct regional power interests may lie behind King Edmund's choice of wives.

The Many Roles of Queen Eadgifu

It could be argued that Eadgifu was the most politically active royal female in England in the mid-tenth-century. She was the third wife of King Edward the Elder, mother of Kings Edmund and Eadred, and grandmother of Kings Eadwig and Edgar, and for nearly fifty years she was as closely associated with the royal court as a woman could be. Her close involvement with the reforming churchmen in the mid-tenth-century, those most intimately connected with the revival of Benedictine monasticism, colors the received picture of Eadgifu, and the historian is therefore at a disadvantage when it comes to discerning her activities outside of a religious, not to mention exclusively male, context.² The historian is therefore left with little narrative evidence for Eadgifu's early life. While the accounts of her activities in her later life are valuable, they provide little insight into exactly how she may or may not have been involved at court from the 920s to the 940s.

² The historian is at a further disadvantage when one considers the period from which the majority of our evidence for Eadgifu's activities comes. The reformists' hagiographers composed the majority of their works several decades after her death, and much of her recorded involvement with the subjects of their *vitae* occurred in her later life, in the 950s and 960s.

There are however other pieces of evidence from which to draw, most notably the corpus of charters from the reigns of Kings Edmund and Eadred. Eadgifu is one of only a few West Saxon royal women ever to have witnessed diplomas, and the sheer number she attested during the reigns of her sons is an indication of her prominence at court during this period.³ There are various other minute details of her life to be found, mostly in the form of tidbits of information scattered between multiple sources. It is challenging, but not entirely impossible, to paint a picture of her life before and during her sons' respective reigns. It will be shown that Eadgifu's influence on her sons was extraordinary, and that her authority extended far beyond the immediate royal family. She can be observed as a careful manipulator of the contemporary political scene; an analysis of her known actions and affiliations shows her to be dedicated to not only the security of her own position as an 'English,' as opposed to 'West Saxon' matriarch within the royal family, but also the tight control over the aristocracy through her influence over marriage policies within the kingdom.

Eadgifu was an important figure long before her sons came to power, and her family's visible story begins around the turn of the tenth century. King Edward the Elder had been married twice already before he married Eadgifu. His first wife, Ecgwyna, by whom Edward the Elder fathered the future King Athelstan, earned a less than splendid reputation from later chroniclers, who identified her as a concubine.⁴ Their relationship does however appear to have had the sanction of the royal family, as their union was established sometime before King Alfred's death.⁵

³ Eadgifu attests twenty-one charters during King Edmund's reign, and twenty-eight from King Eadred's reign.

⁴ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 138-9. See also, Stafford, "The King's Wife in Wessex 800-1066," 13, n. 28. John of Worcester calls her a "woman of noble birth," but conspicuously reserves the title of queen in the same sentence for Eadgifu. See *John of Worcester*, 234.

⁵ King Athelstan was said by William of Malmesbury to have been thirty years old when he acceded the throne in 925, placing his birth around 895. See *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 211.

Ecgwyna bore Edward two children, a daughter, Edith, and a son, Athelstan. Edward the Elder married his second wife, Ælfflæd, around the year 901. The length of her tenure as royal consort is unknown, but the fact that she bore Edward the Elder no fewer than eight children must attest to their relationship being a strong one.⁶

Pauline Stafford believes Ælfflæd may have been repudiated at some point, as she retired to the nunnery at Wilton. If this were the case, the circumstances of her relationship with her husband must have changed dramatically. Ælfflæd may have outlived her husband for a time, as there is some evidence to suggest she was alive in the reigns of Kings Edmund and Eadred.⁷ She was a patron of the arts and a friend of the community at the New Minster, having commissioned on at least one occasion a set of gold embroideries for Bishop Frithestan of Winchester (909-31).⁸ Little else is known of her activities.

At an unknown date, but one likely c.919, Edward the Elder and Eadgifu were married.⁹ She bore him four known children, two sons and two daughters.¹⁰ Her father's name was Sigehelm, and he was probably the ealdorman of Kent.¹¹ He was clearly a landowner of some considerable wealth, as his ability to borrow and pay back the sum of thirty pounds to the king attests.¹² No doubt the standing of her

⁶ Stafford, "The King's Wife in Wessex 800-1066", 8-9. Ælfflæd and Edward's offspring included Ælfweard (d.924), Edwin (d.933), Eadgifu (married to Charles the Simple, King of the Franks), Edith (married to Otto the Great), Eadhild (married to Hugh the Great), Ælfifu (married to Conrad of Burgundy), and two other unnamed daughters.

⁷ Stafford, "The King's Wife in Wessex 800-1066", 13, n.29.

⁸ For more on Ælfflæd, see Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century", 71-2. See also Catherine E Karkov, *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England* (Woodbridge, 2004), 75-6 and n.118.

⁹ Michael Lapidge, John Blair, Simon Keynes and Donald Scragg (eds.), *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (Oxford, 1999), 149.

¹⁰ Edmund and Eadred we are familiar with. As for Eadgifu's daughters, Eadburg ended up as a nun at Winchester, and Eadgifu, named after her mother, was married to Louis of Aquitaine.

¹¹ S 1211: Eadgifu inherited two estates at Cooling, and Osterland, Kent. King Edmund granted her 10 *sulungs* at *North Mynstre*, on the Isle of Thanet, Kent (S 489). King Eadred granted her 30 hides at Felpham, Sussex (S 562).

¹² S 1211. The charter describes the process by which Eadgifu obtained the estates in question, from the time that her father possessed them.

family weighed heavily in King Edward's decision to take her as his queen. Also important is the fact that her father was a bona-fide war hero. Sigehelm's death at the famous battle at 'Holm' in 902 is conspicuously highlighted in a later charter, and the battle was significant enough to be commemorated in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.¹³ The opening years of the tenth century were trying times for the residents of the southeast, as the Danish settlement of East Anglia and Essex had put pressure on the Anglo-Saxons living there. It was not until 917 with the taking of Colchester that the West Saxons restored control in the area.¹⁴

While the *ASC* identifies Sigehelm as an ealdorman, he may have been a suffragan. The annal for 905 (re. 903) in MS 'D' states that another ealdorman perished at the battle at 'Holm', one Sigewulf. The shared prefix *Sige-* may denote a family relationship. Sigewulf is mentioned first, and Sigehelm second, which might suggest seniority.¹⁵ Ealdorman Sigewulf only witnesses one extant document from the reign of Edward the Elder,¹⁶ and possibly two others from the reign of King Alfred.¹⁷ In the charter from 901, he attests as "*dux*", and is clearly our man. The other two documents that might help with his identification (one, the will of Ealdorman Alfred, and the other, a record of a private land swap between the same ealdorman and the monastic community at Christ Church) are datable only between 870x89, and so it is possibly the attestation of a different Sigewulf. However, the fact that these two documents dealt with land in Kent and Surrey suggests that this Sigewulf was a man of local standing in the area. One document claims to have been

¹³ *ASC* 'A' and 'D', sub anno 905.

¹⁴ C.R. Hart, "The Ealdordom of Essex", *An Essex Tribute: essays presented to Frederick G. Emmison as a tribute to his life and work for Essex history and archives* (London, 1987), 57-84, at 62.

¹⁵ This is the case in all versions of the *ASC* that mention the battle at "Holm."

¹⁶ S 362.

¹⁷ S 1202 and S 1508.

ratified within the walls of Canterbury, so it might be possible to identify this individual even more closely with that particular locale.¹⁸

The evidence for Sigewulf's position as an occasionally witnessing ealdorman is tenuous, but considering his interests in Kent he might be identified as the ealdorman of that territory. King Alfred granted him a single hide estate at Farleigh, Kent, c.898; the king addressed him as "*meus fidelis dux*".¹⁹ There is no evidence of Ealdorman Sigehelm ever having witnessed any royal diplomas. Charter survival from this period is limited however, and absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. There seems to be no reason to doubt the *Chronicle's* account, so one must continue to assume that he was indeed an ealdorman. There is enough evidence to support either theory; Sigewulf the ealdorman of Kent, Sigehelm his suffragan, or the ealdorman of another district, (perhaps Surrey), or vice versa. In either case there is evidence for Eadgifu's family having strong ties to the local aristocracy in and around Kent, as well as possible connections with the urban community at Canterbury.

While Eadgifu played no visible role in her husband's administration, her status as a powerful personality is evident in her ability to secure support in the matter of her father's Kentish estates and the associated loans. One particular charter speaks of "her friends" appealing directly to King Edward on her and her father's behalf, and the fact that she was personally encouraged to provide an oath in support of the thirty pounds is evidence of her respected position.²⁰ King Edward's choice of such a strong personality for his wife is telling, and may lend some insight into the king's relationship with the population in the southeast.

¹⁸ S 1202.

¹⁹ S 350.

²⁰ S 1211 is a later charter from the reign of King Edgar (959), but there is no reason to doubt the validity of the account.

The approximate date of Edward the Elder's marriage to Eadgifu may also be significant. If a date of c.919 is accepted, it would place his (alleged) repudiation of his second wife Ælflæd and taking of Eadgifu as his new wife at precisely the same time that he was concluding the process of recovering the Danish-controlled areas between Bedford and Essex, and moving on to the re-taking of Mercia.²¹ King Edward appears to have shifted his focus away from the areas in the southeast relatively quickly. One could assume that his marriage to Eadgifu might have been devised as a move to help consolidate his influence in these recently secured areas. By marrying, as has been seen, an already influential aristocratic lady who was part of a powerful regional family, Edward the Elder may have been attempting to maintain the recently promised fealty of the local inhabitants and to help consolidate his authority in these recently secured areas.²² If this were the case, it would support further links between Eadgifu's family and pro-West Saxon sentiment amongst the ruling elites in Kent. It could have been in King Edward's best interests to marry into a family whose loyalty was already well demonstrated. Such an interpretation would be well in line with Stafford's belief that Ælflæd was repudiated, and might provide a practical justification for such a move.

Other possible political motivations for King Edward's having chosen Eadgifu in particular as his new wife may have been in play. While it remains likely that his choice was part of a policy of keeping the men of Kent close, Edward's developing relationship with Mercia should also be considered. In December of 918, Edward marched into Tamworth and took formal control of Mercia from Ælfwynn, daughter

²¹ ASC 'A' sub anno 918-20.

²² See Shelia Sharp, "The West Saxon tradition of dynastic marriage: with special reference to Edward the Elder", *Edward the Elder 899-924* N.J. Higham and D.H. Hill (eds.), (London, 2001), 79-88, at 82, and Lori Lehtola, *King Aethelstan: 'Rightwys Kyng Borne of All Englonde'*, (PhD, University of Houston, 2004), 47.

of Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians. Æthelflæd had died the June before, and Ælfwynn appears to have succeeded her mother to take command of Mercia. Three weeks before Christmas in the same year Edward deprived Ælfwynn of all authority and withdrew, with her in his custody, to Wessex.²³

The circumstances behind this transfer of power are not entirely clear, but it is generally regarded that Ælfwynn did not possess the strength of character required to rule possessed by her mother, and it became necessary for King Edward to assume control. The Danish threat to both kingdoms still existed, despite the military successes of the previous decade, and the Mercians may have felt it an acceptable move towards greater security. King Edward had been a stalwart ally of Mercia during the preceding years, and the alliance between Wessex and Mercia was likely seen as worth maintaining by both sides at the time.²⁴

That said, there could have been at least some trepidation in Mercia at allowing a foreign West Saxon ruler to assume command of the military and domestic resources of the Mercian kingdom. This is where Eadgifu comes in. As noted above, her father was famously killed at the battle at Holm, in Huntingdonshire, in 905. It must be remembered that this was a battle significant not only to the future of Wessex, but of Mercia as well. Despite the heavy losses suffered by the men of Kent, the battle was seen as a significant victory. Three important men were killed in the fighting. Ætheling Æthelwold, the claimant to the kingdom of Wessex, Eric, the Danish king of East Anglia and Beorhtsige, the rival of Ealdorman Æthelred of

²³ ASC 'C', sub anno 918.

²⁴ According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, upon Æthelred of Mercia's death in 911, "King Edward [the Elder] succeeded to London town and to Oxford, and all the lands which pertained thereto" (Eadweard cyning feng to Lundenbyrig 7 to Oxnaforða, 7 to eallum þam landum þe þærto hyrdon), ASC 'D', sub anno. The Mercian nobility may have considered this annexation of the southernmost areas of Mercia, essentially border territories, agreeable in the context of increased security for both kingdoms.

Mercia, were all struck down in a single stroke. The outcome of this battle effectively resolved the succession dispute in Wessex and removed the rival claimant seeking control of Mercia. This was a vital battle for both kingdoms, and its participant heroes were no doubt well known throughout the land. As one historian has noted, “The importance of this victory for Mercia can be seen in its featuring in the text of *The Mercian Register* even though it had probably involved no Mercian forces”.²⁵

At the risk of stressing symbolism where none may actually have existed, the date of Edward’s marriage to Eadgifu c.919 suggests that relations with Mercia might have been part of his calculations. Who better than the daughter of a fallen military hero, whose actions and death contributed significantly to the dynastic stability of both Mercia and Wessex, to be the new bride of the king of both kingdoms? Edward the Elder’s choice of wife may have been devised as a concession to the men of Kent, while at the same time tipping his helm to the Mercian nobility whose security had been so dearly bought. The relations between Mercia and Wessex during this period are difficult to untangle, despite many efforts, and attempting to fit marriage politics into interpretations of the situation is potentially hazardous. The circumstantial nature of the evidence would nevertheless point to King Edward’s choice of bride being one heavily influenced by immediate political and regional concerns.²⁶

If this interpretation of Edward the Elder’s marriage to Eadgifu is accepted, then one might speculate as to how she would have perceived her own role, as queen, as a symbol of unity between the former kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia. From what is known of her strength of character, it could be suggested that

²⁵ Ian W. Walker, *Mercia and the Making of England* (Thrupp, 2002), 91.

²⁶ One criticism could be that King Edward could have simply married a Mercian; however, the power balance between Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia was likely tenuous at this point, and by marrying Eadgifu King Edward the Elder may have been attempting to maintain a degree of equilibrium in his relations with the different regional aristocracies.

she would have been both willing and able to construct a strong role for herself within the context of the joined kingdoms. It is possible that Eadgifu not only recognized that the adoption of such a symbolic personality was essential to her own power and influence, but also that such a symbolic identity would have tied both her and the royal family closer to the concept of diverse areas being ruled by a single royal authority. It may be worth considering how this, admittedly speculative, notion of mutual reinforcement could have manifested in the policies of the royal family.

Whatever the possible political motivations of her husband for marrying her, there is no evidence of Eadgifu ever having had any public influence over Edward the Elder's administration. She witnesses no documents from his reign, nor is there heard anything regarding her activities from any other source. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* is especially unreliable in the early 920s, and is of little help; indeed, nothing more can be said of her during Edward the Elder's reign. Edward the Elder died in 924, and in the intervening years Eadgifu bore him four known children, two sons and two daughters. As she bore King Edward more children, her influence not only as a royal mother, but also as a queen undoubtedly grew.

While there is no evidence for her being politically influential during the reign of her husband, there is some evidence for Eadgifu's possible involvement at court in the reign of her stepson Athelstan. With her husband dead her position at court was surely weakened, but there is little to recommend her total eclipse. Indeed there is much to endorse the notion that Eadgifu and King Athelstan got along very well, and this was partially explored in chapter three. Additional pieces of evidence to support this theory come from the continent. The first, the inscription in the confraternity book of Pfäfers, was mentioned in chapter two. The second is found in a manuscript

known as the Gandersheim Gospels.²⁷ Near the bottom of the last leaf of the manuscript (168r), there is an inscription that reads:

+ eadgifu regina :- æþelstan rex angulsaxonum
7 mercianorum :-

There has been much speculation surrounding this mysterious inscription, and while its association with King Athelstan is almost assured, its connection with our Queen Eadgifu is questionable. As Simon Keynes has pointed out, it need not be Athelstan's stepmother indicated here, but his half-sister, also named Eadgifu, daughter of Edward the Elder and his second wife Ælflæd.²⁸ The manuscript is believed to have been a gift from King Athelstan to King Otto of Saxony, and that kings' marriage to another of Athelstan's half-sisters Edith was yet another tie binding the West Saxon and German royal families.²⁹

One problem with the inscription is the prominence given to Eadgifu, whose name appears ahead of King Athelstan's. And while Keynes prefers the suggestion that the Eadgifu in question was indeed Athelstan's sister, and not his stepmother, he does so with hesitation. It might be worth mentioning that Keynes is not the only historian to believe that the Eadgifu referred to is Athelstan's sister.³⁰ However, this inscription has been interpreted by Michael Wood as a sign of association between Eadgifu and Athelstan's court, and if it does refer to our Eadgifu (as opposed to

²⁷ Coburg, Landesbibliothek I.

²⁸ Keynes, "King Athelstan's Books", 191.

²⁹ Ibid, 192-3, n.238.

³⁰ See Hanns Swarzenski, *The Anhalt Morgan Gospels*, *The Art Bulletin* 31, No. 2 (June, 1949), 77-83, at 81.

Edward the Elder's daughter), then it might at least be evidence of some recognized relationship between them.³¹

Aside from the potential yet fragile link found in the inscription in the Gandersheim Gospels, there is still a case to be made for Eadgifu being close to King Athelstan, and quite possibly an influential individual in the kingdom. Eadgifu's importance during Athelstan's reign, if not at court then at least in practical terms, is demonstrated further by the text of the charter concerning her father's estates mentioned above. A short time after Athelstan took the throne, the following is said to have transpired:

When Goda thought he had a favourable opportunity, he made his way to King Athelstan and begged that he would intercede for him with Eadgifu for the return of the title-deeds. And then the king did so. And she restored them all except the title-deed of Osterland; and he willingly abandoned that deed to her, and humbly thanked her for the rest; and moreover, with eleven others, he swore to her an oath, on behalf of those living and those yet to come, that this suit should be for ever settled. And this was done with the cognisance of King Athelstan and his councillors at Hamsey, near Lewes. And Eadgifu had the estate together with the title-deeds during the lifetime of the two kings who were her sons.³²

The dispute, which had been ongoing for some time, appears to have been resolved much to Eadgifu's satisfaction.³³ The language of the charter, while biased and clearly composed with considerable hindsight, nevertheless suggests that it was *through* King Athelstan that Goda petitioned Eadgifu for his redress. Perhaps most

³¹ Michael Wood, "The Making of King Aethelstan's Empire: an English Charlemagne?", *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*, Patrick Wormald, with Donald Bullough and Roger Collins (eds.), (Oxford, 1983), 250-272, at 260.

³² S 1211. "Þa Godan sæl þuhte, þa gesohte he þone kynincg Æþelstan, 7 bæd þæt he him geþingude wiþ Eadgife his boca edgift. 7 se cyncg þa swa dyde. 7 heo him ealle agef buton Osterlandes bec; 7 he þa boc unnendre handa hire to let 7 þara oþerra mid eaðmettum geþancude; 7 ufenan þæt, twelfa sum, hire aþ sealde, for geborene 7 ungeborene, þæt þis æfre gesett spæc wære. 7 þis wæs gedon on Æþelstanes kynincges gewitnesse 7 his wytena æt Hamme wiþ Læwe. 7 Eadgifu hæfde land mid bocum þara tvegea cyninga dagas hire suna."

³³ See Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 250, and Brooks & Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, no. 124 [Forthcoming].

importantly, it demonstrates that King Athelstan was recognized as one who was close to, and on good terms with Eadgifu.

The strongest argument for Eadgifu's influence at the court of King Athelstan remains the fact that he did not take a wife, combined with the completely unchallenged accession of Edmund upon his death. As Pauline Stafford has noted, "If Edmund was the obvious successor in the late 930s [Eadgifu] had all the influence of a future queen mother."³⁴ Stafford goes on to suggest that Eadgifu convinced King Athelstan to remain unmarried so as to assure Edmund's succession, and this argument has much to recommend it.³⁵ The present argument would maintain that this was indeed the case, and if so it would imply that Eadgifu's influence over the personal lives of her other family members was also extremely assertive.

If this were the case, it could in turn argue for Eadgifu's having a greater influence during her husband's reign. Despite the nonexistence of any corresponding direct evidence, it seems less than reasonable to assume that Eadgifu gained political power suddenly upon King Edmund's accession, when she first appears in the charter record. This speculation should not be taken too far, but it is an intriguing possibility, and would go a long way to explaining her high prominence during the reigns of her sons. The fact that King Athelstan never married is a key component of this hypothesis. Subsequent arguments will propose that Eadgifu did in fact possess a great deal of power over the question of the West Saxon royal succession, but how early this influence manifested itself remains obscure. Put simply, it seems improbable that her influence both politically and within the royal family's private concerns was non-existent before she becomes visible in the document record.

³⁴ Stafford, *The King's Wife in Wessex 800-1066*, 25.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 19, n. 48.

West Saxon marriage politics were not confined to England during King Athelstan's reign. The continental marriages of his half-sisters are notable not only for their prominence, but by their sheer number as well; it seems highly unlikely that Athelstan would have married them off across the sea without a great deal of careful planning and diplomacy. Ælfflæd's daughter, Eadgifu, had been married to Charles the Simple sometime before 924.³⁶ In 927 Athelstan's own sister Edith was married to King Sigtrygg of York, but the union was short lived.³⁷ In 928 Athelstan responded to the invitations of Henry the Fowler, King of Germany (919-36), who was seeking princesses for his son, the future Otto I.³⁸ King Athelstan sent two of his sisters to Germany; Otto, the future Emperor, chose Edith, while Ælfgifu was married to Conrad of Burgundy.³⁹ At some point in time Eadhild was married to Hugh the Great.⁴⁰ These connections extended the links of the royal house throughout the continent, and raised their level of international prestige.

While there is no direct evidence to suggest that Eadgifu had any influence on the marriages of her stepdaughters, there is equally no reason to assume that she would not have taken part in the process. King Athelstan's fixers when it came to international delegations appear to have been Bishop Cænwald of Worcester (929-57) and Oda, then bishop of Ramsbury.⁴¹ As shall be seen, Eadgifu and Oda had much in common and were doubtless allies. Eadgifu was certainly concerned with maintaining her own prominence and that of her sons, and the exclusion of possibly competing lines of succession would have been in her best interests.

³⁶ *Annals of Flodoard*, 16. See also Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kingdom Under the Carolingians, 751-987* (London, 1983), 313-8.

³⁷ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 199; ASC 'D', sub anno 925. See also Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin II*, 3-6.

³⁸ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 170-1, 198-201.

³⁹ *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 198-201.

⁴⁰ *Annals of Flodoard*, 16.

⁴¹ See Keynes, "King Athelstan's Books", 198-201; and Brooks, *The Early History of The Church of Canterbury*, 222-3, n. 48.

By encouraging Athelstan to marry his sisters overseas, a process with which Eadgifu herself may well have been involved, Eadgifu would have been removing them from marriage eligibility within England.⁴² This would have reduced the risk any of their offspring may have posed to the prospects of her own male progeny, while extending the royal family's potential influence through the kin relationships that international alliances would provide.⁴³ Whether these marriages and contacts were calculated in the face of a perceived threat, or was part of consolidating royal influence is open to debate, but the possibility of such a policy should not be dismissed.

Eadgifu's sudden and remarkably prominent appearance in royal documents during Edmund's reign is striking, and demands particular attention. If she was so powerful as to have had a say in the shaping of the West Saxon royal succession during the 920s and 930s, why is there no hard evidence of her presence at court until after King Athelstan's death? Did King Athelstan consciously limit her visible power while he still ruled, or is our lack of evidence for any formal involvement at court a consequence of a lack of sufficient documentation in general to support this thesis? Or, on the other hand, did Eadgifu only begin exhibiting a high level of public influence during the reigns of her sons, as outlined by the evidence of her attestations in royal charters?

The answers to these questions are not entirely clear. As has been speculated in chapter three, it likely became apparent that Edmund would succeed his elder half-

⁴² A similar conclusion was reached by Lori Lehtola, in *King Aethelstan: 'Rightwys Kyng Borne of All Englonð'*, 47-54, and she stresses King Athelstan's own insecurity. No doubt Athelstan would have been greatly concerned, but it is argued here that Eadgifu had more reason to feel threatened by her step-children on behalf of her own offspring, and would have actively promoted their removal from England.

⁴³ Both Athelstan and Edmund appear to have maintained close ties to their sisters' adoptive families, and were actively involved in restoring the fortunes of their nephew, Louis d'Outremer, in 936 and 946, respectively. See *Annals of Flodoard*, 28, 44, and above, chapter four.

brother early in the year 939, as it is around this date that Edmund begins to witness King Athelstan's charters. If Eadgifu had a hand in the decision to make Edmund the rightful and recognized heir to the throne, one might expect to see her witnessing alongside her newly and rather conspicuously honored son, but her first attestation is not observed until Edmund began issuing charters of his own in 940.

While the case for Eadgifu's political power having been built up gradually during the 920s and 930s is almost entirely supported by indirect indications from the period of her greatest influence (the 940s and 950s), it is difficult to disregard the suggestion that she entered the political scene when Edmund became king in 939. Indeed, the evidence of her attestations in royal diplomas, taken alone, suggests just this. However, even if one rejects the argument that Eadgifu did play a significant, albeit limited, role in shaping some aspects of West Saxon royal policy before Edmund took the throne, it is difficult not to conclude that she influenced significant aspects of Edmund's character. In this model, Eadgifu's impact on her eldest son was most likely already strong before he inherited the throne, but only most visible afterwards.

But once Edmund became king, would his relationship with his mother have changed significantly? In other words, is Eadgifu's sudden visibility in the documents a sign of her changing political status, or more a public recognition of an authority that was obscured by the meager evidence from King Athelstan's reign? These are difficult questions to address, and care should be exercised in how the evidence at hand is used. The conventions surrounding the witnessing of Anglo-Saxon royal charters remain obscure, and often only educated guesses can be made when it comes to the reasons as to why one individual attests a document while

another individual does not. However, by examining closely how Eadgifu witnessed charters during Edmund's reign, the extent of her power might be better understood.

Of King Edmund's fifty-seven extant charters, Eadgifu witnessed twenty, or just slightly more than one third.⁴⁴ Of these two are probably authentic⁴⁵ and one is clearly spurious. The remaining seventeen are reliable for discussion and comparison.⁴⁶ In all of the authentic charters she witnesses, Eadgifu is identified as "*regis mater*," or the king's mother.⁴⁷ This identification may provide a clue as to why she did not witness any of King Athelstan's charters. Eadgifu was only related to Athelstan by marriage; their relationship was one of stepmother and stepson. King Edmund, of course, was her first-born son, thus the first of Eadgifu's blood relations to take the throne. This distinction may shed some light on West Saxon traditions of royal identification in charters and other documents. If it is assumed that West Saxon traditions dictated that Eadgifu could only witness official documents if her relationship with the king was one of blood, it might help to explain her sudden appearance in the charter record.⁴⁸

There is only one extant West Saxon charter witnessed by a royal woman before the series of documents that bear Eadgifu's signature, and it comes from the reign of Edward the Elder.⁴⁹ The document is also the first to record the attestations of two West Saxon royal women at the same time; it is attested by Ealhswith, King

⁴⁴ Eadgifu's attestation is found on the following charters: S 465, S 467, S 470, S 475, S 477, S 481, S 483, S 485, S 487-8, S 491, S493-7, S 501, S 505-6, S 512 and S 514.

⁴⁵ S 506 (see Kelly, *Charters of Selsey*, 79-80) and S 514 (see A. Campbell (ed.), *Charters of Rochester*, Anglo Saxon Charters I (London, 1973), xxvi) are considered probably authentic.

⁴⁶ S 477 is spurious; see Brooks, *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*, 220-1.

⁴⁷ In S 477, the single spurious charter bearing her attestation, she is styled "*regina*."

⁴⁸ This was first noticed by Pauline Stafford; see *Queen Emma & Queen Edith*, 199-204.

⁴⁹ There is ample evidence of Mercian royal women witnessing the charters of their husbands, especially Æthelswith, who witnessed several documents from the reign of her husband Burgred (852-74), including S 210, S 214, S 222, and S 1201. Æthelflæd, Lady of the Mercians witnesses several of her husband's charters, including S 217 and S 220-1. The comparative prominence of queens in Mercia has been long recognized; see Stafford, *The King's Wife in Wessex 800-1066*, 3-4, n.8.

Edward's mother, as well as his first wife Ælfflæd.⁵⁰ Ealhswith is styled, like Eadgifu later, as the mother of the king; while Ælfflæd is identified as "*coniunx regis*", or the king's wife. As it is the only precedent for West Saxon royal female charter attestation, taking this charter at face value is hazardous. Comparing the diploma with much earlier Mercian charters, where signatures of females are much more common, is not a safe option either. Further, its authenticity is not entirely without doubt, and attempting to form conclusions from only one document is always tricky.⁵¹ However, if one assumes for a moment that the relationship between a particular king and the female royal family members who were permitted to witness charters was restricted to one of blood or marriage, that is, marriage to the king in question, not simply marriage into the royal family, it might explain why it was not until Edmund took the throne that Eadgifu began to witness royal charters.⁵²

Although the evidence is from a slightly later date, it might be a significant parallel that upon King Edgar's death his queen, Ælfthryth, went from a position of regularly witnessing royal documents to witnessing none from the reign of her stepson, Edward the Martyr. However, upon her own son Æthelred's accession to the throne she begins to witness documents again. All politics surrounding the death of Edward the Martyr aside, the familial relationships with the reigning king enjoyed by both Eadgifu in 939 and Ælfthryth in 979 were identical, and, from what can be determined, their charter attestations follow a similar pattern. The similarity is not in itself conclusive, but it does help support the notion that West Saxon queens and queen mothers could exert influence without leaving evidence of such in the charter record. It at least furthers the suggestion that Eadgifu's sudden appearance in

⁵⁰ S 363. See Kelly, *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*, 210.

⁵¹ The document may be an abbreviated copy. See Finberg, *ECW*, 78-9.

⁵² See Stafford, *Queen Emma & Queen Edith*, 200-1.

diplomas in 940 was based more on West Saxon traditions of charter attestation, rather than a sudden rise in her own personal power and influence.

As has been noted, Eadgifu's attestation is found in about one third of King Edmund's extant charters. While they cannot be treated as a wholly separate group from the rest of Edmund's charters, there are patterns and similarities among many of them that are worthy of note, and may help in understanding the reasons as to why Eadgifu's name appears on certain charters and not on others. Indeed, the fact that her attestation does not appear in the majority of documents suggests that her attendance at court was not necessarily essential, yet it was still considered significant in certain contexts. This is an important point, as it possibly indicates that Eadgifu's presence at royal assemblies was not indispensable to King Edmund's effective kingship, but was nonetheless valuable.

Indeed, when the diplomas Eadgifu's attested during Edmund's reign are examined closely, it can be observed that thirteen of the seventeen authentic documents were grants to either religious individuals (nuns, bishops, and presbyters) or religious institutions. Indeed there is not one grant to a religious individual or institution that Eadgifu does not witness. This overwhelming preponderance permits some insight into Eadgifu's witnessing patterns and interests. The charter evidence appears to show Eadgifu as not only closely associated with religious women specifically, but also with the landholding interests of the entire English Church.

Eadgifu's association with a number of grants of land to religious women from the late 930s to the 950s has been recognized for some time, and it is this sub-group that should be addressed first.⁵³ This group of endowment charters begins late in

⁵³ For discussion of this group of diplomas, see Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon* I, 125-9 and 145-8; also *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 53-9, 66-70; Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar*, 177-8; and Sarah Foot, *Veiled Women* (2 vols., Aldershot, 2000), I, 180-5.

King Athelstan's reign, and comes to an end roughly around King Eadwig's accession in 955. While Eadgifu does not witness every single grant to nuns and other religious during the reigns of her sons, she does witness the majority of them.⁵⁴ There is also an example where her involvement in a grant to a religious woman is made explicit in the text of the charter.⁵⁵ This has been seen as an early sign of Eadgifu's interest in the politics of monastic reform, as she was so conspicuously associated with the reform movement later in her life.⁵⁶

A particular charter that stands out amongst this group is one from 942, S 485. The document records a restoration of seven hides at *Cheselbourne*, in Dorset, to Wynflæd, a nun. This Wynflæd is almost certainly the mother of King Edmund's first wife, Ælfgifu.⁵⁷ In one of King Edgar's charters from 966, one Wynflæd, identified as the king's grandmother, is mentioned as being the original grantor of an estate at *Uppidelen*, Dorset, to the community at Shaftesbury.⁵⁸ The two estates, *Cheselbourne* and *Uppidelen*, lie almost immediately adjacent to each other.⁵⁹ This suggests that Wynflæd was well situated in the West Country, and possibly helps in localizing the origins of her family.

Unfortunately this is as close as one can come to associating Eadgifu with King Edmund's first wife; but it is still a clear connection. And while as of yet there appears to be no overriding pattern linking all of the grants to religious women, they may correspond to Eadgifu's interest in their status. Further speculation about

⁵⁴ There is a single grant to a nun from Athelstan's reign, S 448. From Edmund's there are a total of seven: S 464-5, S 474, S 482, S 485, S 487 and S 493. From Eadred's reign there are five: S 517a-b, S 534-5 and S 563.

⁵⁵ See S 535, and Brooks & Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, no. 118 [Forthcoming].

⁵⁶ See Brooks, "The Career of St. Dunstan", 12; as well as Hart, "Two Queens of England", 10-15; and also M.A. Meyer, "Women and the Tenth Century English Monastic Reform", *Revue Bénédictine* 87 (1977), 34-61.

⁵⁷ Foot, *Veiled Women I*, 172.

⁵⁸ S 744.

⁵⁹ Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 104.

Eadgifu's concerns with the socio-political status of these so-called *religiosae feminae* may be valuable. When it is recognized that one of the female religious recipients of land was related to the first wife of the king, more possibilities emerge. It is possible to consider a situation where many young ladies (and their families) in the kingdom were competing with each other for a place alongside a young, newly enthroned king. It is possible that Eadgifu was endeavoring to enforce a degree of control over the lives of eligible noble women so as to regulate the aristocratic wedding market in England, not to mention the families involved. By presenting eligible women with valuable grants of land in return for their taking a quasi-monastic life, Eadgifu could compensate their families and build alliances beneficial to the interests of the royal family, while at the same time narrowing and controlling the number and quality of potential eligible aristocratic wives. Such a policy would fit well not only alongside a strategy of growing royal influence, but could be seen as agreeable to certain religious figures who were beginning to promote monastic reform.

Such a strategy would have required a strong will and the means to endow, both qualities possessed by Eadgifu; and the influence over the aristocracy potentially obtainable by such a policy could have been considerable. Women from powerful families could be very valuable as brides to competitive or aspiring kin groups, and by controlling the eligibility of well-connected women Eadgifu could potentially keep these predations at bay. The parallel with Eadgifu's suggested motivations behind her possible involvement in the overseas marriages of her daughter and stepdaughters is marked.

There is another group that stands out in the charters that Eadgifu witnessed during Edmund's reign. King Edmund granted a large number of estates to his

bishops, and Eadgifu witnessed every single one.⁶⁰ Her witnessing of these grants would not be so conspicuous if there were similar patterns amongst the other witnesses, the bishops, ealdormen, and thegns. However there is little recognizable pattern amongst the religious and lay witnesses, so Eadgifu's signature stands out as a tie further linking this group of charters.⁶¹

Using this attestation pattern as evidence of Eadgifu's interest in church lands is not without its problems. One is, as always, at the mercy of the limited number of available charters, and it must not be forgotten that the sample is most likely a very small representation of a much larger original corpus. Furthermore, this particular pattern appears to break down when the charters Eadgifu witnesses from Eadred's reign are examined. King Eadred granted a large number of estates to religious individuals and institutions, but Eadgifu appears to have witnessed some and not others. And while there are problems with many of Eadred's grants to religious houses, including a copious number of later forgeries as well as frustratingly truncated witness lists, Eadgifu's association with religious donations is not as pronounced as it is during King Edmund's reign. This may reflect a sign of a subtle change in her influence, or perhaps more likely, a clue regarding the relationship between her two sons, and how her role at court changed over time.⁶²

As has been demonstrated in chapter four, around the year 943 or possibly early in 944, Eadgifu's relationship with Edmund likely underwent a significant change. It was at this point that her younger son Eadred replaced her as the foremost witness to King Edmund's diplomas. As noted, while the shift in Eadgifu's signature place does at first appear to indicate a deterioration of her status, it is more likely that

⁶⁰ S 483, S 495-6, S 506 and S 514.

⁶¹ S 506 has an abbreviated witness list, excluding all lay witnesses. See Kelly, *Charters of Selsey*, 79.

⁶² See Stafford, *Queen Emma & Queen Edith*, 202-4.

this was on account not on her losing rank, but on Eadred's gaining it. Thus it should not be viewed as evidence of a decrease in Eadgifu's overall power. Indeed, most of the available evidence suggests that Eadgifu's influence over her sons only grew.

Much has been written on Eadgifu's early connection to such influential church individuals such as Dunstan and Æthelwold, and their concerted efforts to further the burgeoning monastic reform movement.⁶³ Eadgifu is generally credited with persuading King Edmund to further the careers of these two churchmen in particular, mostly on the basis of their apparently close relationship with her in the 950s and 960s.⁶⁴ As one historian has noted, the evidence for an early political alliance or close relationship is indeed "indirect and inadequate."⁶⁵ It must also be remembered that it was King Edmund who gave many of these men their first major promotions into the Anglo-Saxon Church. It still, however, remains a difficult task to determine just how heavy a hand Eadgifu may have had in their promotions, or if their early endorsement was more a part of Edmund's design. Despite the lack of direct evidence for an earlier association, this interpretation should be supported, as opposed to the notion that their close relationship developed later during Eadred's reign. Admittedly, this interpretation argues from hindsight; but the majority of corresponding evidence seems to point to the conclusion that Eadgifu was both politically active and closely associated with reformist ecclesiastical interests at an earlier rather than a later date.

Eadgifu's relationship with Dunstan in particular was built up over a long period, and by 956 their relationship can be described as having become both a

⁶³ See Stafford, *The King's Wife in Wessex 800-1066*, and also "Queens, Nunneries, and Reforming Churchmen"; see also Brooks' "The Career of St. Dunstan", 1-23.

⁶⁴ Stubbs, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, 30, 95, 185 and 188. See the *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, 86-7 and 92-3.

⁶⁵ Brooks, "The Career of St Dunstan," 12.

personal and a political alliance. But just how closely they were associated in the late 930s and 940s remains to be seen. Dunstan was present at King Athelstan's court from the mid 930s, and so they must have surely known *of* each other, if not personally. Dunstan was apparently no stranger to wealthy and influential women. In his *vita* by the author known as 'B,' Dunstan is said to have secured the patronage of one Æthelwynn, a "*nobilis quædam matrona.*"⁶⁶ She was likely a woman of the type who received of grants of bookland during Edmund and Eadred's reigns, and may help further tie Dunstan and Eadgifu. While Æthelwynn was not as powerful as Eadgifu, the two women surely had shared interests.

However, B's mention of Æthelwynn stands out, as she is the only individual who is named as a patron of Dunstan's early career. Given the fact that Dunstan's relationship with Eadgifu was so conspicuously highlighted in the sections dealing with his later career, it is worthwhile to note that Eadgifu does not appear earlier in B's narrative. This is not necessarily indicative of the pace of their relationship's development; but the fact remains that no mention of Eadgifu's presence in Dunstan's world is made until Eadred attempted to appoint him to the bishopric of Crediton.⁶⁷ By this time (c.953) Eadgifu was styled as Dunstan's "special friend" (*specialem amicum*), and it seems unreasonable to assume her level of interest in Dunstan's career commenced on a sudden whim.⁶⁸

Thus it is difficult to tell just how much Eadgifu had to do with Dunstan's early advancement at the court of King Edmund. The language in B's account lays

⁶⁶ Stubbs, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, 20-1.

⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 29-30. Too much emphasis should not be put on this point. Hagiographers are not known for the highlighting of political motivations being behind the advancement of saintly careers, and one would not expect to find much mention of political matters in tenth-century *vitae*.

⁶⁸ That said, the hagiographer was writing from the position of hindsight; by the time he composed his life of Dunstan his relationship with Eadgifu would have been well established. The outside observer would no doubt assume that their relationship had been amicable since day one.

stress on Dunstan's obligation to and reliance on King Edmund himself, and while this sort of tribute is to be expected in hagiography, it serves to emphasize the decision to bring Dunstan closer into the royal court as Edmund's alone.⁶⁹ The story of Dunstan's banishment and subsequent appointment to the abbacy of Glastonbury is equally focused on Dunstan's special relationship with King Edmund. *B*'s tale of Edmund's decision to appoint Dunstan upon his miraculous survival at the scene of a hunting accident is told in decidedly personal terms.⁷⁰ It remains safe to assume that Eadgifu had some limited impact on Dunstan's early career, but the majority of the evidence points more towards an early close relationship between Dunstan and King Edmund himself.

The argument so far has attempted to show that Eadgifu was quite clearly a powerful and influential lady, most likely from the date of her marriage to King Edward the Elder. Her familiarity with the workings of the English court during the years of Edmund's youth before he became king would have given her extensive experience in the ways and means of power, and this would have been of great benefit to the young king upon his accession. Eadgifu was active in both the political and the religious spheres, as her close connections with churchmen shows. Her involvement in the endowment of female religious should be seen not only as part of her interest in popular modes of piety, but perhaps also as an active means of control over the aristocracy. Perhaps most importantly, Eadgifu may have found herself assuming the position of a matriarch, and it is in this context that her influence in both the politics

⁶⁹ See Stubbs, *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*, 21-30. "Deinde autem defuncto rege Æthelstano et statu regni mutato, Regis succedentis, Eadmundi scilicet, sublimitas beatum Dunstanum, qui vitæ probabilis et linguæ extiterat eruditæ, conspectibus ejus adesse præcepit, ut etiam ipse inter regios proceres et palatinos principes annumeraretur electus."

⁷⁰ None of Dunstan's friends or enemies at Edmund's court is ever named in *B*'s account, with the exception of the saint's brother Wulfric, who has been discussed in chapter four. Considering Wulfric's Glastonbury connections may allow more confidence in a case for his influencing King Edmund's decision.

of the realm, and the affairs of her family should continue to be examined. The protection of her own position can be shown to have been intimately linked with the royal succession, and she could have taken active steps to maintain royal control over a united England through the manipulation of the landed gentry. In order to add more facets to this argument, the other significant women in her and her son's life must be introduced and discussed in detail. Any family structure is disrupted when a new member is added to the kin group, either through the birth of a child or the joining of two families through marriage. By taking a close look at the women Edmund took as his wives, further clues will emerge as to how the royal family got along with each other.

St Ælfgifu: Holy Wife and Mother

King Edmund's first wife appears to have been more famous in death than in her life. Nearly all of the evidence for her existence comes from her subsequent sanctification, and even the sources dealing with this aspect of her life are as limited as they are problematic. Despite severe constraints on our knowledge, some semblance of her life can still be pieced together from secondary material. Considering the fact that she was the mother of King Edgar, Ælfgifu's family is astonishingly obscure. It is fairly certain that the name of her mother was Wynflæd, as she was remembered in 966 when her grandson, King Edgar, confirmed a grant to the community at Shaftesbury (see above).⁷¹ Wynflæd had been the original donor of the land in question, an estate of ten hides in Dorset, some five miles due north of Dorchester. At some point in 942 King Edmund restored and confirmed ownership of seven hides at Cheselbourne (in

⁷¹ S 744.

addition to a grant of a further eight hides at the same place) to one Wynflæd, a nun.⁷² They are almost certainly the same individual. From this limited evidence of landholding Ælfgifu's family can be placed with some confidence in the West Country, and Dorset in particular; the family's close connections with the nunnery at Shaftesbury only reinforces this suggestion.

This is not to say that Ælfgifu and Wynflæd's family were strictly localized in Dorset. There is evidence that may suggest their family had more wide-ranging landed interests. The Old English will of a certain Wynflæd is a very interesting document indeed, and if the individual in question and Ælfgifu's mother are one and the same person it would prove a very valuable one for the present investigation. It exists as a single sheet original in BL Cotton Ch. viii. 38, and may be a stray from the Shaftesbury archive.⁷³ It is a relatively long will, and a great deal of property, both landed and transportable, is bequeathed to a number of individuals. The will bequeaths estates in Wiltshire⁷⁴, Oxfordshire⁷⁵, Hampshire⁷⁶, Somerset⁷⁷, and a large number in Berkshire⁷⁸. If the Wynflæd of the will were indeed Ælfgifu's mother, then the will would be evidence of their family having extensive landholdings across much of the West Saxon heartlands, as well as Mercia.

This suggestion is not without its problems. As Kelly notes, the will is devoid of grants to or mention of members of the royal dynasty, something that might be expected in the will of one so closely related to the royal family.⁷⁹ The document

⁷² S 485.

⁷³ Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 56.

⁷⁴ *Ebbelesburnan*; Ebbesborne Wake, and *Inggeneshamme*; perhaps, Inglesham, Wiltshire. See D. Whitelock (ed.), *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (Cambridge, 1930), 110-11.

⁷⁵ *Ead[b]urggebyrig*. Adderbury, Oxfordshire. See Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 111.

⁷⁶ *Faccancu[mbe]*. Faccombe, Hampshire. Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 111.

⁷⁷ *Cinnuc...Gyfle*, Chinnock and Yeovil, Somerset. See Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 110.

⁷⁸ *C[ol]les[h]ylle*, Coleshill; *Waneting*, Wantage; *Scrifenanhamme*, Shrivenham; and *Cillariðe*, Childrey, Berkshire. See Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 110-11.

⁷⁹ Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 56.

seems most concerned with manumitting a great number of slaves, and ensuring the endowment of certain members (most likely other nuns) of the community at Shaftesbury. There is however a further possible connection found in the text of the will, which might potentially lead back to the royal family. In its final section the will refers to a grant made by King Edward the Elder to Wynflæd's mother, identified as Brihtwyn.⁸⁰ A charter of King Athelstan from 939 mentions one Brihtwyn as having been given five hides at West Orchard, Dorset by Alfred, most likely the bishop of Sherborne.⁸¹ The charter records a rather complex transaction, and there is some confusion as to whether it is a genuine document or a product of later interpolation.⁸² Nevertheless, a close reading of the charter from 939 may prove useful.

The document in question, S 445, contains additional information regarding Brihtwyn's family. Her father is identified as Wulfhelm, and it further states that Brihtwyn was married to the brother of Bishop Alfred of Sherborne. This Wulfhelm is difficult to identify, as only a few attestations by individuals of that name survive from the period during which he, if he were Ælfgifu's grandfather, might have been alive. Bishop Alfred of Sherborne provides a more promising lead. He was bishop between 933x4 and 943, and very little is known of him. There is some confusion since two individuals of that name witness charters from the 930s and 940s as bishop. It is therefore difficult to connect him directly with any specific kin group.

However, Alfred's successor in the bishopric of Sherborne, Brihthelm, can possibly be associated with the royal kin group. In 963 King Edgar granted to one of his ministers, one Ælfsige, five hides at East Orchard, in Dorset.⁸³ This property bordered the estate at West Orchard that Bishop Alfred of Sherborne had granted to

⁸⁰ Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 15.

⁸¹ S 445. See also Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 41.

⁸² Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 42.

⁸³ S 710.

Brihtwyn. As Kelly notes, "...if Ælfred is correctly identified as the contemporary bishop of Sherborne, the transfer must have taken place before his death in 939x943. West Orchard could only have been an episcopal estate in 963 if the five hides had subsequently passed into the possession of *another bishop* (or if the transaction in [S 445] was more complicated than it appears)."⁸⁴ This suggests the possibility that Brihthelm may have once possessed the property (see below). In other words, the only way the estate could have gotten into Brihthelm's hands is if it had been either granted directly to him by its former possessor Brihtwyn, or returned to royal control and then re-granted. Either possibility would demonstrate that this particular property was one closely associated with the royal family.

Bishop Brihthelm of Winchester was one of three prominent bishops of that name during the mid-tenth-century, and keeping them separate is difficult.⁸⁵ This particular individual appears to have been Bishop of Selsey c.957x963, Bishop of Sherborne 958x963, and possibly Bishop of Winchester 959x963.⁸⁶ Now, our Brihthelm was granted seven and a half hides of land at Easton, Hants, (just east of Winchester) in 961, and in the charter is identified as a kinsman of King Edgar.⁸⁷ The alliteration found between the name of the bishop and the Brihtwyn identified as Wynflæd's mother is suggestive of some possible kinship, albeit not directly traceable. But if Bishop Brihthelm was related to King Edgar in some way, a connection through his maternal great-grandmother seems plausible.

Now, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Bishop Brihthelm was replaced in 963 (having died, presumably) by Abbot Æthelwold, the future saint and

⁸⁴ Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 100 (my emphasis).

⁸⁵ For biographical notes to these three bishop Brihthelms, see Hart, *ECNENM*, 302-6.

⁸⁶ Hart, *ECNENM*, 303.

⁸⁷ S 695. The estate of Easton appears to have been an episcopal estate of the Bishop of Winchester; see S 1275.

one of the principal architects of the tenth-century monastic reforms.⁸⁸ If Brihthelm was in possession of the estate at West Orchard at the time of his death and the property was subsequently returned to royal control, it would tally well with King Edgar's subsequent grant to his thegn Ælfsige in that same year. It is perhaps no coincidence that another charter, possibly from the same year, records the royal confirmation of Bishop Brihthelm's property at Easton to the church at Winchester.⁸⁹ This may suggest that the estate in question was held by Brihthelm with reversion to Winchester, or perhaps bequeathed by him.

The connection between the two Orchard estates, Brihthelm, Brihtwyn, and Shaftesbury is not rock solid, but it points to the possibility that multiple members of Ælfgifu's extended family were entrenched in the countryside of the West Saxon heartland, as well as the ecclesiastical aristocracy. In order for it to work it must be assumed that Brihthelm was related to Brihtwyn, Brihtwyn related to Wynflæd, and Wynflæd the same as Ælfgifu's mother. If these individuals were indeed all related, then the descent of the properties at East and West Orchard would appear to link them all to the bishopric of Sherborne as well as the royal family.

There remains one more line of enquiry that may shed some light on Ælfgifu's family. In 940 King Edmund granted fifteen hides (*mansae*) to one Ælfhild at Culham, in Oxfordshire.⁹⁰ The recipient is identified as a relation of his. Attempts at identifying Ælfhild have been made before, with varying degrees of success.⁹¹ Part of the problem lies in the charter itself. While authentic, it is not without difficulties.

⁸⁸ ASC 'A', sub anno.

⁸⁹ S 827. The charter is dated 963x75.

⁹⁰ S 460.

⁹¹ Marc Meyer suggested that Ælfhild was granted the land as part of the re-foundation of a nunnery on the site of the minster church dedicated to St Helen. Meyer presumed that this was done in partnership with King Edmund, and that his death six years later led to a decline in popularity, and eventual general loss of interest in the foundation. See "Patronage of the West Saxon Royal Nunneries in Late Anglo-Saxon England", *Revue Bénédictine* 91 (1981), 332-58, at 346. It is an intriguing possibility, but as Susan Kelly has pointed out, highly untenable; see *Charters of Abingdon I*, 131.

The text clearly gives to Ælfhild full rights of alienation in regards to the property; this information was intentionally suppressed by the twelfth-century compiler of the chronicle-cartulary of Abingdon, who wished to imply that the property had been held only for a life-lease.⁹² The compiler went so far as to forge a charter in the name of King Coenwulf so as to set a false precedent.⁹³

These documents are connected to a late Abingdon tradition, which suggests that King Coenwulf of Mercia (796-821) granted the estate of Culham to his “sisters” on very favorable terms. Kelly notes that this tradition of royal association with this particular property is of interest, but that any possible significance is overshadowed by the confused and ever-changing nature of the history of Abingdon’s endowment. The Abingdon compiler was passionate in his protecting of the foundation’s property rights, but, however, the repetitious nature of the royal associations with Culham stands out, and may be suggestive of more than just a forger’s interpolation of a later tradition. Some small faith may therefore be placed on the text of the original grant as it stands.

It would be incredibly tempting to attempt to connect Ælfhild with the family of Ælfgifu and Wynflæd, and her relationship with Edmund could be one of sister-in-law. The mention of King Coenwulf’s sisters is of course evocative of a similar relationship between Edmund and Ælfhild, but there is no evidence that the Abingdon compiler had any more information at his disposal about Ælfhild’s identity than more modern historians do. The alliteration in Ælfhild and Ælfgifu’s first names would be consistent with a sisterly relationship, but this of course proves nothing. The timeliness of the grant is consistent with the probable date of Edmund’s marriage to

⁹² Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon I*, 47-8 and 130-1.

⁹³ S 184.

Ælfifu, and the notion that the king would have endowed close family members of his new wife with lands should not be ruled out. Unfortunately these highly dubious conditions remain the only foundation for this hypothesis. The property of Culham itself cannot be traced vertically, and there are no corresponding documents to give any hint at Ælfhild's identity. Ultimately this notion must remain an unproven hunch.

This somewhat lengthy digression into minute details of landholding and exploratory prosopography might seem better suited to a footnote, what with its highly speculative and circumstantial nature. However, the fact that virtually no reliable details of Ælfifu's family have survived makes such speculation necessary if one is to flesh out the possible reasons she might have been desirable as King Edmund's wife. If Ælfifu's extended family were an established and potentially powerful force in the ecclesiastical establishment, as her connections with Shaftesbury and (possibly) the diocese of Sherborne suggest, it would go a long way to explain Edmund's reasons for marrying her. That is, his first marriage could be seen as promoting alliances between the royal family and interests in these areas. It would also further the suggestion that Eadgifu's influence in Edmund's marriages was motivated by concerns relating to the aristocracy's religious affiliations.⁹⁴ Such a background might also go some way to explain Ælfifu's later sanctity and cult status. If Ælfifu's extended family were familiar to contemporary churchmen as being included in the contemporary Anglo-Saxon religious establishment, not to mention

⁹⁴ Several questions remain, however. If Edmund did marry into the religious aristocracy, would contemporaries have recognized such a move as significant? Anglo-Saxon kings had a habit of drawing their queens and consorts from the ranks of the lay aristocracy; such a marriage may have been seen as a movement towards a strengthening of royal support for the church establishment in general, possibly weakening the ties between the king and the lay aristocratic families that so dominated the political scene. This latter suggestion may stretch the point, but such considerations must be voiced if we are to address every possible aspect of the importance of Edmund's marriages.

the possibility of popular sentiment and favourable reputation in the localities, she would have been a strong candidate for beatification from the start.⁹⁵

The exact date of Ælfgifu's marriage to Edmund is unknown, but it appears most likely that they were wed shortly after he became king. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* informs us that the couple's second son, Edgar, was born in 943.⁹⁶ Unfortunately it cannot be determined for certain when Eadwig was born, but he was at least a year older than Edgar, which would place his birth c.942 at the latest. Barbara Yorke has estimated Eadwig's age at fifteen years upon his accession to the throne in 955, which would place his birth in or around 940.⁹⁷ There is no cause to doubt Yorke's reasoning, and the assumption that Edmund and Ælfgifu married and produced their first child shortly after his having taken the throne seems reasonable. The date of their marriage, around his accession, would therefore point to the possibility that relations with the aristocracy in Wessex were a concern in the early days of his kingship. Ælfgifu bore Edmund two sons and no daughters while they were married; of her own activities before her death little more can be determined from contemporary sources.⁹⁸

William of Malmesbury is the only post-Conquest source of information for Ælfgifu. He had much to say about Ælfgifu the saint, and it may be possible to hazard the guess that he had written sources dealing with her available to him,

⁹⁵ There are also hints at an increased awareness of Mercian traditions surrounding royal saints. See Barbara Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses* (London, 2003), 81.

⁹⁶ ASC 'C' sub anno 959: "Here King Eadwig passed away, and Edgar, his brother, succeeded to the kingdom both in Wessex and in Mercia and in Northumbria; and he was then 16 years old." (Her forðferde Eadwig cing, 7 Eadgar his broþor feng to rice ægðer ge on Wessexum ge on Myrcum ge on Norðhymbrum, 7 he wæs þa .xvi. wintre).

⁹⁷ Yorke, "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century," 74-80.

⁹⁸ There does however exist a contemporary prayer for St Ælfgifu that survives in a damaged manuscript from the eleventh century. Unfortunately, the manuscript is in too poor a state to reveal anything worthy of comment, except the fact of its existence. See Bernard James Muir (ed.), *A Pre-Conquest English Prayer-Book* (BL MSS Cotton Galba A.xiv and Nero A.ii (ff.3-13)) (Woodbridge, 1988).

unfortunately now lost. In addition to his description of her piety, generosity, and general virtue, there are several anecdotes worth repeating. Curiously, she is said to have "...secretly release[d] criminals who had been openly condemned by the gloomy verdict of a jury."⁹⁹ While this may be a hagiographic topos, the idea that the king's wife would (or could!) go behind the backs of the authorities and release convicted criminals is strange enough to warrant comment.¹⁰⁰ As has been seen in chapter five, King Edmund was an active lawmaker, and the administration of justice was a high priority during his reign. Could this be interpreted as a sign of Ælfgifu's possible influence on Edmund's law codes? This is speculation at its wildest, but the influence that a very religious wife might have on her husband should not be discounted.

William of Malmesbury claimed many other virtues for Ælfgifu, and some of the details he includes are suggestive.¹⁰¹ While he ascribes the building of the town of Shaftesbury to King Alfred, Ælfgifu, so he says, built the nunnery.¹⁰² This is most likely a mistake on William's part, as Asser states that King Alfred founded the nunnery and set his daughter Æthelgifu as its first abbess.¹⁰³ However, William clearly identifies Ælfgifu as King Edmund's wife, so it is unlikely that he confused her with Æthelgifu, despite their similar names. It could be that William, as he so often does, has simplified a source here, and unfortunately added a bit of confusion.

It is possible that William had some account of Ælfgifu's involvement in some building activity at Shaftesbury. Perhaps Ælfgifu was instrumental in re-building, or adding to the existing buildings of the nunnery that were built by King Alfred. It

⁹⁹ *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 124.

¹⁰⁰ The passage is placed alongside comments on her disdain for "expensive clothes," a common habit of medieval female saints.

¹⁰¹ William of Malmesbury discusses Ælfgifu in two of his works, the *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum* and the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*. He repeats much of the same information in each work, but there are distinct differences in each account of her.

¹⁰² *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 124.

¹⁰³ *Asser's Life of King Alfred*, 105, n.237.

seems far more likely that William was here referring to a source that stated that Ælfifu did in fact do just this, and that he neglected to mention that there had been a nunnery at Shaftesbury already. Indeed as has already been seen, Ælfifu and her family were very closely associated with the community at Shaftesbury, and appear to have contributed significantly to its endowment. Ælfifu also may have taken an active role in Shaftesbury's physical refurbishment. It is equally possible that William's source for this information was oral, that is, an ingrained part of local tradition picked up on his extensive travels across England. If this were the case, it would be testimony to the perseverance of her veneration in the localities at a late date.

In his description of her saintly attributes, William also speaks of Ælfifu's powers of prophecy. In a curious passage from the *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, William describes her rather elaborate response to a vision had by a young King Edgar while out hunting. There are obvious problems with the veracity of the story, not least of which being the fact that Ælfifu died when Edgar was two or three years old, not exactly an age to be out hunting. Her prophecy concerns Edgar's future, and the events that unfolded after his death, the respective factions that supported his own sons and the anti-monastic reaction that came to pass.

The tale serves William's narrative well, in that it teases the reader with details of the story to come, at the same time reinforcing the sanctity of his hero, King Edgar. It is still an exciting prospect to the historian that William had such information available to him, far removed in time as it was. The nature of the prophecy story, as well as William's own language, suggests that it did not come from a written source, but was one of the tidbits of rumor and popular lore picked up (or made up) by

William.¹⁰⁴ While it is more likely than not that the story is a conflation of vision tales and generic hagiographic *topoi*, it is further possible testament to the strength and popularity of St Ælfgifu's cult nearly two centuries after her death.

William of Malmesbury went so far as to compose eight lines of Latin verse in honor of St Ælfgifu, no mean sign of respect for such a local saint. They refer to the miracles associated with her after her cult was established, but the opening lines are especially enigmatic. It is worth reproducing them in full:

She bore sharp pain for several years,
Then gave her soul, refined, to God.
Her blessed remains, their journey done,
God's mercy marked with countless signs.
The Blind and deaf, who worship them,
Restored to health, attest her work.
The lame who come walk upright home,
The rich return made wise, the crazed made sane.¹⁰⁵

The reference to her enduring pain in her final years might suggest William having knowledge of some debilitating or chronic illness suffered after the birth of her sons, but again it could be hagiographic formula. The cause of her death is not recorded, but it is safe to assume that it was due to natural causes. Also interesting is the suggestion that her remains were associated with healing, and further evidence of an established and popular cult. Ælfgifu is believed to have died sometime in 944. While her feast day is recorded as the 18th of May, this may or may not be a reliable indicator of when she actually passed away.¹⁰⁶ The question of her saintliness is a puzzling one, as she remains one of only a very few royal saints that were only 'royal' by marriage.

¹⁰⁴ William prefaces the story by saying, "Meanwhile it is not, I think, inappropriate if I commit to writing a vision which was shown him by some heavenly agency." *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 251.

¹⁰⁵ *Gesta Pontificum Anglorum*, 124.

¹⁰⁶ David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints* (Oxford, 1978), 128. May appears to have been a red-letter month for Ælfgifu and Edmund, as he was killed on St. Augustine's feast day, the 26th.

William of Malmesbury was not the only chronicler to mention Ælfgifu in a favorable and saintly context. Ealdorman Æthelweard briefly discusses her in his Latin *Chronicle*, composed sometime in the last quarter of the tenth century. Æthelweard was a member of the royal family, being descended from King Æthelred I, and one of the most prominent ealdormen during the reigns of King Edgar, Edward the Martyr, and Æthelred II. It was his sister, Ælfgifu, who was briefly married to King Eadwig in 956. His chronicle entries for the 940s are brief and relatively sparse, but he provides significant corresponding evidence of Ælfgifu's saintliness. He states, "And in the same year [944] Queen Ælfgifu died, the wife of King Edmund, and afterwards she was held to be a saint. And at her tomb, with the help of God, down to the present day, very many miracles take place at the monastery known by the common people as Shaftesbury."¹⁰⁷

By examining Æthelweard's career no firm statements can be made as to what his date of birth might have been, but it is possible that he was alive, albeit very young, in the 940s.¹⁰⁸ His ealdordom lay in the Western Shires, and his landholdings and activities show him to have been firmly established in the western areas from Cornwall to Somerset and Dorset; Shaftesbury may very well have been within the confines of his district. Despite his close connections with the royal family, and the communal family memory that such contact would entail, it seems reasonable to assume that some of Æthelweard's account of Ælfgifu's sainthood was based on first hand observations. Indeed, his comment that miracles were witnessed "down to the present day" suggests that by the time he was composing his chronicle there remained a flourishing local cult at Shaftesbury.

¹⁰⁷ *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, 54.

¹⁰⁸ Æthelweard was promoted to his ealdordom in 973, and died c.998.

It is perhaps of little surprise that Ælfgifu was mentioned so prominently in Æthelweard's *Chronicle*, as he and his family were keen proponents of the Benedictine reform movement. Both he and his son Æthelmær, who succeeded his father in his ealdorðom, were patrons of Ælfric the Homilist, and their family was instrumental in the founding and endowment of several monasteries, including Cerne in Dorset and Eynsham, in Oxfordshire.¹⁰⁹ Ælfric, the student of SS Oswald and Æthelwold, was placed as the first abbot of both of these houses, first Cerne (987) and then Eynsham (1005).¹¹⁰ It stands to reason that Æthelweard's interest in saintly relations, even more so ones who would no doubt have been remembered fondly for their reformist leanings, would be significant.¹¹¹

It may also be the case that Æthelweard had a personal interest in Ælfgifu's sanctity. As will be shown in greater detail below, his own sister became embroiled in the dynastic crisis in 956 when King Eadwig married her, seemingly against Eadgifu's wishes. That Ælfgifu died, as opposed to being repudiated, would have been significant to a familiar audience in the later tenth century, especially when considerations of family pride are considered. Æthelweard makes no mention of King Edmund's second wife, Æthelflæd of Damerham, and this could be a sign of bias towards a memory focused on his first wife. This could be connected with comments in chapter two, relating to the regional differences apparent in the way that King Edmund's reign and activities were recorded. A West Country perspective, as

¹⁰⁹ *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, xii-xvi.

¹¹⁰ See *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, xii-xvii. See also, James Hurt, *Ælfric* (New York, 1972), 31-41.

¹¹¹ William of Malmesbury drew on Æthelweard's *Chronicle* extensively for his histories, despite heaping ridicule on his Latin style. William's information on Ælfgifu however is significantly more detailed, and there are no visible linguistic associations between the two sources. It appears almost certain that while William may have consulted Æthelweard on certain items, many of the details concerning St Ælfgifu that William committed to writing came wholly from another source. The possibility of a lost *vita* or other written source is a tantalizing one, but this notion is completely unprovable. It has been speculated that William himself may have written such a life; see Thompson, *William of Malmesbury*, 35.

opposed to an eastern or Mercian one, could lie behind the stressing of Ælfifu's sanctity.

St Ælfifu continues to be an enigmatic figure, perhaps one of the least well known Anglo-Saxon saints. While Ælfifu may possibly have been descended from the West Saxon ecclesiastical elite, such associations remain speculative. Of all the Anglo-Saxon queen mothers of the tenth century, her life is the most obscure, and questions remain as to why this may be. Issues surrounding Eadgifu's authority over the marriages of her sons cloud the perspective, but it has hopefully been demonstrated that the queen mother's influence on the choice of King Edmund's first wife may be seen in the context of aristocratic sensibilities relating not only to the Western regions of the kingdom, but also the ecclesiastical elite within those areas. That King Edmund's second wife came from East Anglia is undoubtedly significant, and it is to her family's relationship with the royal family that discussion will now turn.

Æthelflæd of Damerham: Political Pawn, or Professional Widow?

The 'D' version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* entry for 946 contains many interesting pieces of information, several of which are unique to 'D', and most of which have been addressed in chapter two. It is within this particularly valuable entry that one also learns that after Ælfifu's death, King Edmund appears to have remarried. After describing how Edmund met his untimely death, the annal reads, "And Æthelflæd of Damerham, daughter of Ealdorman Ælfgar, was then his queen."¹¹² There exists a relative wealth of documents relating to both Æthelflæd of

¹¹² "7 Æþelflæd æt Damerhame, Ælfgares dohter ealdormannes, wæs þa his cwen..." ASC 'D', sub anno.

Damerham and her family, and one is therefore in a far better position to discuss the particulars of her life. Very little is known as to her role during Edmund's lifetime, as much of the evidence comes from her Old English will and other documents from several decades after Edmund's death.

As mentioned in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle's* entry, Æthelflæd was the daughter of Ælfgar, who is identified as an ealdorman. There remains some question of which particular region he was in control of, but it seems most likely that he was the ealdorman of Essex. Ælfgar appears not to have been promoted to his ealdordom until after King Edmund's death, and it is therefore important to remember that when Edmund married Æthelflæd, she was merely the daughter of a local magnate; presumably a promising individual on his way up, but not yet holding an official court position.¹¹³

Ælfgar's wife's name was presumably Wiswith [Wigswyth], but no further kin relationships are known. Ælfgar's will illustrates a pattern of landholdings firmly established in Essex, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, so it is fairly safe to assume that his family was firmly based in and around that area.¹¹⁴ Cyril Hart has speculated that many of the lands possessed by Ælfgar were originally part of those properties seized from the Danish inhabitants of East Anglia by King Edward the Elder in 917, and furthermore that these lands were used by both himself and his successors to endow the ealdordom of Essex in subsequent years.¹¹⁵ If this was the case, it might suggest that Ælfgar's family was originally ethnically 'English', as opposed to having a more 'Danish' identity; that is, one can hardly expect the English king to have given control of the area back to descendants of the recently conquered Danish population. One

¹¹³ For a full biographical discussion of Ælfgar see Hart, *The Danelaw*, 127-32.

¹¹⁴ Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 6-9. See also Hart, *The Danelaw*, 130.

¹¹⁵ Hart, *The Danelaw*, 134.

might speculate further about specifically where Ælfgar's family origins may have been. While his ancestors were buried at Stoke-by-Nayland on the Suffolk-Essex borderlands, there is some evidence to suggest a possible Mercian connection / origin for the family. Just because his family was buried locally does not necessarily indicate that Ælfgar's ancestors were originally from the area; indeed, his will only states that 'ancestors' were interred at Stoke-by-Nayland, and this could be interpreted as meaning his own parents only (see further, below).

Ælfgar's family could have been part of the group of thegns who were encouraged by Edward the Elder in the second decade of the tenth century to purchase lands from the Danish inhabitants in the Eastern Danelaw. This might be stretching the evidence, but Ælfgar's family did have Mercian links. One is forced to rely on the indirect evidence of his family's associations and alliances with Mercia after his death, as opposed to any direct evidence of a Mercian origin for either himself or his ancestors. While Ælfgar himself disposed of lands in his will only as far north and west as the area around Cambridge, his son-in-law Byrhtnoth held lands as far afield as Worcestershire and Oxfordshire. His other son-in-law, Athelstan *Rota* was the ealdorman of southeast Mercia after c.955. Furthermore, Ælfgar's elder daughter could have been named after Æthelflæd, lady of the Mercians, an honorable and popular name for girls at this time that expressed clear Mercian associations. It has been noticed that a great number of women in mid-tenth century England were named Æthelflæd, and the connection between this prevalence and the memory of the Lady of the Mercians seems plausible.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Walker, *Mercia and the Making of England*, 119-20.

The will of Ælfgar's younger daughter, Ælfflæd, states that her ancestors (*mine ylðran*) granted lands in the past to certain "holy places" (*halgum stowum*).¹¹⁷ The will implies a particularly close family association with St Paul's minster in London, as two properties are said to have been bequeathed to the minster sometime previous. While the majority of the properties granted in the will were supposed to be for the use of the specific communities that received them, the family's estate of *Hadham* is said to have been given as "episcopal property". This particular property is not mentioned in Ælfgar's will, but it is mentioned in Æthelflæd's; she granted it first to Byrhtnoth and her sister for their lifetime, and made provision for it to revert to St Paul's as episcopal property upon their deaths.¹¹⁸

In one particular case it can be determined that when referring to her "ancestors", Ælfflæd was in fact probably indicating her elder sister Æthelflæd. It is all too easy to assume that the term "ancestors" refers to one's predecessors removed at least one or perhaps two generations, as when the term is used in a modern context it usually implies relations no closer than one's grandparents. Ælfflæd was using the term to indicate a sister who had been deceased for only a decade or so before her own will was drawn up. With this in mind, then, when Ælfgar states in his will that his "ancestors" were buried at Stoke-by-Nayland, he could be implying only his own parents.¹¹⁹ When the specific language used in their wills is examined closely, the notion that Ælfgar's family had resided in this part of England for a greater length of time appears less certain, and this may strengthen Hart's hypothesis.

¹¹⁷ S 1486.

¹¹⁸ Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 34-5.

¹¹⁹ Whitelock translated the OE *eldrene* as "ancestors" throughout *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, but she did express her own doubts as to whether "parents" was possibly what was meant; see *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 99.

Even if the particular property of *Hadham* was bequeathed after 962, there is evidence to suggest that Ælfgar's family was closely associated with Theodred, Bishop of London from 926-51/3. Theodred's own will shows the bishop as a major landowner in Suffolk (as well as Essex, Cambridgeshire, and Norfolk), where he was also likely bishop.¹²⁰ That Ealdorman Ælfgar and Bishop Theodred may have been on intimate terms is indicated by the reference made to the bishop in Ælfgar's will:

And Bishop Theodred and the Ealdorman Eadric told me, when I gave to my lord the sword which King Edmund gave to me, which was worth a hundred and twenty mancuses of gold and had four pounds of silver on the sheath, that I might have the right to make my will; and God is my witness that I have never done wrong against my lord that I may not have this right.¹²¹

The question of the relationship between these two men is significant, as Theodred was very close to the royal family and the administration of the realm.¹²² The bishop would have been a powerful ally at the royal court for a local magnate like Ælfgar, and as there is little evidence of his attendance at court before King Edmund's death the possibility arises that it was partly on account of Theodred's influence that Ælfgar and the king may have been acquainted. The mention of Ealdorman Eadric of Wessex should not be overlooked, as he was the youngest brother of Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King' of East Anglia, and one of King Edmund's closest councilors.¹²³ The future King Edgar was fostered in his household.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 99, 102.

¹²¹ Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 4-5. S 1483: "And me kidde Peodred biscop and Eadric Alderman þa ic selde mine louerd þat suerd þat Eadmund king me selde on hundtuelftian mancusas goldes. and four pund silueres on þam fetelse þat ic moste ben mine quides wirde. And ic nefre forwrouht ne habbe on godes witsesse wið mine louerd buten ic so mote."

¹²² See *EHD*, no. 106. Theodred was also involved in King Athelstan's legislation; see *EHD*, no. 37, and Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 296-300.

¹²³ For a fuller discussion of Ealdorman Eadric, see above, chapter four.

¹²⁴ See Hart, *The Danelaw*, 572-4, 577 and 579-80.

There is a further link between Ealdorman Ælfgar, Theodred, and the royal family that can be explored. There is reason to believe that Theodred may have been on close terms with queen mother Eadgifu, and if this were the case it might go some way in explaining King Edmund's choice of Ælfgar's daughter as his second wife. In his will, Theodred bequeathed fifty marks of 'red gold' (*redes goldes*) to one Eadgifu.¹²⁵ While there is no way to tell for certain that this Eadgifu is King Edmund's mother, the fact that the gift immediately follows that of Ælfgar's *heriot*, the gift of his own personal *wergild* to the king, suggests that the recipient was most likely the queen mother.

The rather large sum of red gold was a generous gift, and is suggestive of a close relationship between two individuals of high status. It is also worthy of note that no reason is given for the gift, no caveat or acknowledgement of thanks for a specific deed done or service rendered; the gift is very straightforward, and further evidence of an established relationship. It also suggests further that Eadgifu was keenly conscious of both her religious and secular allies, and adept at endearing herself to them.

The approximate date of Theodred's will allows for the possibility that his relationship with Eadgifu developed to the point of obligatory gift-giving of this magnitude at a date after King Edmund's death, that is, after such a relationship would have been beneficial to Ælfgar's family in the context of Æthelflæd's marriage.¹²⁶ However it seems much more likely that Theodred was closely allied with the royal family from an early date, as in 942 King Edmund granted Theodred an estate at Southery, in Norfolk.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ S 1483.

¹²⁶ Whitelock dated the will to between 942 and 951; see *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 99.

¹²⁷ S 483.

Thus it can be safely said that Eadgifu was closely allied to the family of Ealdorman Ælfgar, as well as Bishop Theodred. Theodred may have been a hinge linking the two families together, the bishop possibly in a position to curry favor for Ælfgar's daughter with King Edmund and Eadgifu. It should be kept in mind that while Eadgifu in all probability played the greater part in Edmund's choice of his second wife, hers was surely not the only voice in the king's ear. These regional connections between the royal family and powerful families based in the areas east of London in Essex and East Anglia further imply the notion that after c.944, King Edmund was forging closer associations with interests outside of Wessex, and by marrying into Ælfgar's family he was establishing links between the elites of these areas. Ælfgar's eventual promotion to the position of ealdorman is further evidence of this, and can be connected with some of the conclusions made in chapter four.

What can be said about Æthelflæd herself? At the risk of stating the obvious, it is significant that she was intimately associated with her marriage portion, the one hundred hides of land at Damerham and Martin, in Hampshire, and Pentridge in Dorset.¹²⁸ In the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* she is said to have been “*aet Domerhame*”, and the use of the OE preposition *aet*, meaning “of” or “from” is suggestive of a significant residence at that particular location. It is curious that in the same sentence where she is identified as Ealdorman Ælfgar's daughter, she is so obviously associated with this particular estate. Its location in Hampshire was a far cry from her paternal homeland in East Anglia. Was it her primary abode? Did she retire there upon Edmund's death? The answer to these questions is far from clear. The lands that King Edmund had granted her

¹²⁸ S 513.

in 944 were for her lifetime, with reversion to St Mary's at Glastonbury, so she was more than secure in her endowment. She eventually inherited further lands from her father, but between 946 and Ælfgar's death c.951 the land Edmund granted her may have been her only property.

Whatever the case, it would appear as though her appellation was established within a relatively short amount of time, between 944 and the year the *Chronicle* entry was composed.¹²⁹ It could be that she was commonly associated with this estate in particular because she was tied to it. Barbara Yorke has recently drawn attention to the growing practice in the tenth century of queens and widows remaining in the regions associated with the family they married into.¹³⁰ Although her family was from the areas around Essex, Æthelflæd might have been more closely associated with the West Saxon royal family by the time of King Edmund's death, as opposed to the notion of her returning to her fathers' control. Her status after King Edmund's death may have been reduced to that of a quasi-cloistered royal widow, and if this were the case, the lands of her marriage portion would have been the most likely location for her effective confinement.

Part of the reasoning behind this suggestion is the fact that Æthelflæd bore Edmund no children. This could be accounted for if it is assumed that Edmund had only recently married her in 946, and there was little time between their marriage and the king's death. Unfortunately it is not known not for certain whether they were married immediately after Ælfgifu's death, or if a

¹²⁹ For more on this, see above, chapter two. When the entry in the ASC 'D' is examined closely one notices the rather personal nature of the entry. It smacks of intimate knowledge, almost as if the annalist knew well the people about whom he was writing. If this were the case, it might be possible that the author of the entry embellished Æthelflæd's position slightly.

¹³⁰ Yorke, *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses*, 72-104, at 81-3.

significant amount of time elapsed between Edmund's bereavement and subsequent remarriage. There is also the strong possibility that Æthelflæd was not yet quite of childbearing age when she married Edmund, and the twin possibility that she was simply unable to conceive. On the other hand, when one follows the argument that Eadgifu was devoted to the aspirations of her children and grandchildren, it is entirely possible that an arrangement had been made with Æthelflæd so as to ensure Eadwig's and Edgar's eventual succession. This could be easily accomplished by ensuring that Edmund had no further progeny.

Æthelflæd could have been a wife to King Edmund in name only, their marriage designed to unite the royal family with a well-connected East Anglian aristocratic family; the union established perhaps for the sake of an alliance between Eadgifu's interests and those shared by Ealdorman Ælfgar, Bishop Theodred and possibly Ealdorman Eadric's family as well. This resonates with what has been proposed in chapter four. If it is accepted, as suggested above and elsewhere, that similar arrangements were made with Kings Athelstan and Eadred, so as to ensure a smoother succession, then surely this emerges as a distinct possibility.

If this was the case, can Æthelflæd be considered little more than a concubine? The answer is probably not, as she was clearly identified as "queen" (*cwen*) in the ASC 'D', and the title carries with it a host of implications. Since there is little reason to doubt the genuineness of the *Chronicle* entry, it must therefore be assumed that whatever arrangements may have existed between King Edmund, Æthelflæd and Eadgifu, Æthelflæd was

indeed recognized as a legitimate queen despite having no offspring.¹³¹ This is an important distinction to make, as it raises an important question. Upon King Edmund's death, which branch of Æthelflæd's kin group would have retained a greater interest over her future status: the kin of her father Ælfgar, or the royal family? Or, more specifically, since Æthelflæd had been married to the king, recognized as his queen, and thus endowed with a degree of legitimacy, would Eadgifu and the royal family have allowed Æthelflæd to remain independent of their control?

Again, the answer is not entirely clear. From what is known of Anglo-Saxon kin relationships, it could be assumed that Æthelflæd would have returned to the aegis of her father's immediate family, or shut away securely as a nun. However, it must be remembered that as with so many other things, when dealing with the royal family many usual assumptions about traditional Anglo-Saxon kinship conventions do not always apply. In this particular case, there is sufficient evidence to suggest that after King Edmund's death, former Queen Æthelflæd, while no longer technically a part of their kin group, was still considered by the royal family to be relevant to their interests, and therefore subject to royal control as part of the family's, and especially Eadgifu's, concern with the politics of aristocratic marriage alliances.¹³² There is no evidence to suggest that Æthelflæd ever became a nun or was formally cloistered, and it may be the case that Eadgifu maintained control over

¹³¹ Although composed sometime later, Abbot Ælfric of Winchester's statement in his homilies that "the queen gives birth and the ætheling by his birth thrives to the throne" may be relevant here. See B. Thorpe (ed.), *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church* (2 Vols., London, 1844-6), I, 110.

¹³² King Edmund's assassination in May 946 no doubt threw a wrench into any family planning that may have been afoot, and it is difficult to tell how much Æthelflæd's status might have been affected by the circumstances of his death.

Æthelflæd's marriage status for the opportunities that this might offer in the future.

It has for some time been accepted, although not universally, that after King Edmund's death Æthelflæd of Damerham married Athelstan *Rota*, a south-Mercian magnate and an up-and-coming political player.¹³³ Dorothy Whitelock first proposed this in *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, and Cyril Hart and others have supported the suggestion.¹³⁴ It is based on an entry in Book II of the *Liber Eliensis*' section dealing with Ealdorman Byrhtnoth and his family's benefactions to the Abbey of Ely. In this source, immediately following an account of her sister Ælfflæd, Æthelflæd is identified as "*Huius autem soror, nomine Æthelfleða, uxor Æðelstani ducis...*"¹³⁵

This interpretation has recently been challenged by Andrew Wareham, who stresses the fact that neither Æthelflæd nor Ælfflæd's wills make any mention of Athelstan *Rota*, his family or his household.¹³⁶ Wareham sides with the suggestion that the Ely compiler made a mistake, in this case confusing Æthelflæd with Ælfwynn, who was the wife of Ealdorman Athelstan of East Anglia.¹³⁷ Dr Wareham's position is entirely tenable, given the nature of the evidence, but it could be argued that a flat dismissal is a bit hasty. If the Ely compiler did confuse the two women, his error was a rather heinous gaffe, one

¹³³ He is identified as "*rota*" in S 582, most likely to distinguish him from Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King.' See Hart, *ECNENM*, 299-300. That Athelstan *rota* was most likely the ealdorman of Middlesex is made clear in the text of S 1447; see Robertson, *Anglo-Saxon Charters*, no. 44; and also Chadwick, *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*, 177.

¹³⁴ See Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 138-9; Hart, *The Danelaw*, 128; and M. Locherbie-Cameron, "Byrhtnoth and his Family", *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*, D. Scragg (ed.), (Oxford, 1991), 253-62, at 256.

¹³⁵ *Liber Eliensis*, 136.

¹³⁶ Andrew Wareham, *Lords and Communities in Early Medieval East Anglia* (Woodbridge, 2005), 53, n. 30.

¹³⁷ See also Alan Thacker, "Saint-making and Relic Collecting by Oswald and His Communities", *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*, N.P. Brooks and C.R.E. Cubitt (eds.), (Leicester, 1996), 244-68, at 257.

that seems implausible given Æthelflæd and her extended family's close relationship with the abbey.

Furthermore, the Ely compiler clearly had knowledge of Æthelflæd's will, as he mentions its provisions later in the same section.¹³⁸ For the compiler to convey accurate information regarding Byrhtnoth and Ælflæd, and mistake Æthelflæd for another woman who lived some three decades after her death seems unlikely.¹³⁹ It is true that Æthelflæd's will makes no mention whatsoever of Athelstan *Rota*, but this in and of itself proves nothing. The case against Æthelflæd of Damerham having remarried is therefore not without its strengths, but it is far from airtight. It is on account of these ambiguities that discussion can tentatively proceed from the assumption that Æthelflæd may well have married again after King Edmund's death, and the remaining argument will now attempt to show how, and in what circumstances, such a marriage might have been brokered.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ *Liber Eliensis*, 137: "Dedit autem illis Dittune et Hedham et Cheleshille, et ea in testamento suo Anglice confirmari fecit, sed sorori sue predictae Ælflede, dum viveret, villam de Dittune concessit habendam." ("[Moreover] she gave them Ditton and Hedham and Kelshall, and in her will in English she had these things confirmed, except that she made the proviso that her sister, Ælflæd, who has been mentioned earlier, should keep the vill of Dutton while she lived.") English translation by Janet Fairweather, *Liber Eliensis, A History of the Isle of Ely From the Seventh Century to the Twelfth* (Woodbridge, 2005), 164.

¹³⁹ If the Ely compiler did mistake Æthelflæd of Damerham for Ælfwynn, he must have been very confused indeed. He would have known from her will and his own preceding section on Ealdorman Byrhtnoth and his death at the battle at Maldon, that she must have died before the year 991.

¹⁴⁰ The circumstances of Æthelflæd's remarriage, if correct, would be a case virtually unique in Anglo-Saxon history. Anglo-Saxon royal widows have remarried, but only very rarely. Judith, the wife of King Æthelwulf (839-58), married her stepson Æthelbald with much scandal, and then married Baldwin 'Ironarm' after Æthelbald's death. Judith's father, Charles the Bald, however, did not sanction either match. Emma, second wife of Æthelred II, was forcefully married to Cnut in 1018 as a symbol of his conquest and the unification of his Danish empire and England. What sets these examples apart, however, is the radically exceptional context. In the former case, Judith's marriage to her stepson was severely frowned upon, and she was married to Baldwin after she had returned to Frankia, and was under her father's protection; she was no longer part of the West Saxon political scene. In the latter example, Cnut was making a conscious and powerful statement by marrying the widow of his defeated opponent; his control over England was symbolized in his taking of its king's wife. Æthelflæd, however, remained in England after King Edmund's death, and the match between herself and Athelstan *Rota* appears to have had official sanction; it is this fact that sets their marriage so far apart from established tradition. See Pauline Stafford, "Charles the Bald, Judith, and England",

It can be determined from Ealdorman Ælfgar's will that Byrhtnoth and Ælfflæd were married sometime before the year 951, as she and Byrhtnoth received several of her father's estates in conjunction.¹⁴¹ Æthelflæd, however, appears not to have remarried by the date of her father's will, as all of the lands that she inherited went to her alone. Since it seems unreasonable to suggest that Ealdorman Ælfgar would have granted estates to his son-in-law Byrhtnoth, and not to a possible son-in-law Athelstan, it is therefore argued that the year 951 should act as a *terminus post quem* for Athelstan *Rota*'s marriage to Æthelflæd.

Ealdorman Ælfgar's own will may provide a further clue to Æthelflæd's status. In it he bequeaths the property of Lavenham, Suffolk, to a *possible* future grandchild. The property was to go to "[Ælfgar's] daughter's child if it be God's will that she have any, unless Æthelflæd wishes to grant it to him before; and if she have no child, the estate is to go to Stoke for our ancestor's souls."¹⁴² It seems that Ælfgar believed it conceivable that Æthelflæd, while at this time widowed and presumably not yet remarried, had the potential still to bear children. Æthelflæd did eventually bequeath the property to Stoke, so she clearly had no offspring; but marriages were often barren ones, as her first to King Edmund was. Surely this raises the likelihood that she could have married a second time, as her own father appears to have envisioned the prospect of her bearing children sometime in the future.

While it cannot be said for certain when Æthelflæd and Athelstan *Rota* may have been married, there is a case for proposing a date between 957 and 959. It is in

Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom, Margaret T. Gibson and Janet L. Nelson (eds.), BAR International Series 101 (Oxford, 1981), 139-53, at 147-52.

¹⁴¹ Byrhtnoth was the future ealdorman of Essex, whose death was famously recorded in the poem celebrating the Battle of Maldon.

¹⁴² Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 6-7.

this context that Athelstan *Rota*'s early role in the kingdom should be examined. No thegn by that name witnesses any of King Athelstan's charters, but there is one document from early on in Edmund's reign, and one from Eadred's reign that could bear his attestation.¹⁴³ The first, from 940, records a royal grant of ten hides at *Oswaldingtune*, near Ashford in Kent, to Æthelswith, a nun.¹⁴⁴ An Athelstan *minister* witnesses the charter at the twenty-first place.¹⁴⁵ The second charter in question, from 946, records a grant of four hides to one Æthelgifu, a religious woman, at Tolleshunt (*Tollesfuntum*), in Essex.¹⁴⁶ It should be remembered that queen mother Eadgifu was likely instrumental in the myriad grants of land to religious women during the reigns of her sons, and this might provide evidence of a link between her interests and the possible interests of the Athelstan *minister* who may witness the two charters.¹⁴⁷ The estate at Tolleshunt, just northeast of Maldon, is very close in proximity to several estates owned by Ealdorman Ælfgar and by Ælfflæd.¹⁴⁸ The recipient's identification

¹⁴³ As made clear in chapter one, the business of determining individuals' attestations in Anglo-Saxon charters is a tricky one, and the historian encounters great difficulties when attempting to assign any given identity to a name on a witness list. When it comes to identifying ealdormen or bishops, the task poses fewer problems, as these names can be cross-referenced with other sources, such as narrative sources and episcopal lists. The ranks of the ministers, however, are an ever-changing and incredibly plastic group in the charter record. This is due to the obscure nature of charter production, regional differences in the king's assemblies, and the truncation, emendation, and abbreviation many charters have suffered at the hands of their keepers. A grain of salt must therefore accompany any effort to identify individuals without corroborating evidence.

¹⁴⁴ S 464. The property is likely Westwell, near Ashford. It is interesting to note that the boundary clause mentions one "Eadgifu's boundary" (*eadgife mearce*); while Eadgifu is a common name, in the present context its presence may provide a further clue to their association; see Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*, no. 110 [Forthcoming]. There is also the possibility that Athelstan's inclusion towards the end of the witness list is indicative of a kin relationship with the recipient of the property, or perhaps local Kentish witnesses, as hypothesized by Brooks and Kelly.

¹⁴⁵ A different scribe added the last six attestations on the charter, numbers eighteen through twenty-three.

¹⁴⁶ S 517a.

¹⁴⁷ See note 142, above. That the two charters concern properties in the southeast may suggest that the Athelstan who witnesses them is only a local notable; however, what is there to prevent such a local notable to rise through the ranks and eventually become an ealdorman?

¹⁴⁸ Tolleshunt is a stones' throw from Ælfgar's estate at Totham. See Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills*, 8-9. The property of Tolleshunt was by the year 1000 in the possession of the bishopric of London (See S 1458a). If the assumption that both Athelstan *Rota* and the family of Ælfgar would have had an interest in either the recipient or the property is correct, it might be further evidence of a link between them, the diocese of London, and Bishop Theodred. The prominent nature of this Athelstan's

as a religious woman serves to further connect this particular land grant with the family of Ealdorman Ælfgar, as it has been shown they were very generous when it came to local religious institutions in the area.

Normally it would be extremely difficult to make any sort of positive identification from the ranks of the *ministri*, as this group of charter witnesses is wrought with inconsistencies and difficulties of interpretation (see preceding page, note 141, and above, chapter one). In this particular case, however, there might be room to speculate somewhat, as these two charters are the only ones that bear the name Athelstan amongst the *ministri* for the years between 939 and 955.¹⁴⁹ This highly tenuous possibility aside, the lack of any firm evidence of Athelstan *Rota*'s activities before King Eadwig's reign should not be seen as confirmation of Athelstan's separation from important circles, or as a sign of little or no contact between him and the royal family. It was one of Eadwig's first major acts as king in 955 to appoint Athelstan *Rota* to the ealdordom of Southeast Mercia; he did not simply appear from the gray mists.¹⁵⁰

By 955, when Athelstan *Rota* was promoted to his ealdordom, he was undoubtedly already a powerful, well-connected individual. He likely had a

signature, at the third place amongst the *ministri*, offers further support for a potentially close, as opposed to a peripheral, connection with the principals involved in the latter grant.

¹⁴⁹ Athelstan is a relatively common Anglo-Saxon name; see the Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England Project (PASE), at <http://eagle.cch.kcl.ac.uk:8080/pase/index.jsp>. S 545 records a grant of King Eadred to an Athelstan *minister*, but the document is most likely a post-conquest forgery. See Sawyer, *Charters of Burton Abbey*, 16. An Athelstan *dux* witnessed a single charter from late in King Eadred's reign (S 570) so it is possible that Athelstan *Rota* was promoted in 955 before Eadwig assumed the throne; however there are difficulties in dating the document precisely, and it would be less problematic to reject it; see Kelly, *Charters of Shaftesbury*, 74.

¹⁵⁰ Athelstan *Rota*'s first attestation as *dux* is in S 582. This particular charter needs fresh attention. Its authenticity is not entirely without doubt, and it has certain unusual features. First off, it is the only document in which Athelstan is identified as *rota*. Furthermore, the witness list includes one Ælfsie *dyring*, who witnesses tenth amongst the *ministri*. He may have been related to the Byrhtsige *Dyring* who assisted Eadgifu in her dispute over her father's Kentish estates (see S 1211). This may provide a further link between Athelstan *Rota*, Eadgifu, and certain other Kentish aristocrats. The fact that the charter records the donation of one hundred hides to the nuns at Wilton is suggestive further of Athelstan *Rota*'s interest in female religious endowment.

relationship of long standing with the royal family, was a trusted advisor to the young King Eadwig, and his power base in S.E. Mercia made him even more an individual to be reckoned with. This is evident in his rapid promotion, visible in the record of charter attestations. The lack of any discernable activities before this date, combined with the rapidity of his promotion, points towards Athelstan's inclusion amongst a conspicuous group of individuals who were supporting Eadwig in the years leading up to his succession to the throne, but who witnessed few, if any, royal documents. This group explodes upon the scene in 956, suddenly visible in the charter record. This group of prominent men includes Athelstan *Rota*, the future Ealdorman Byrhtnoth, and Ælfhere, the son of Ealdorman Ealhhelm.¹⁵¹ Athelstan *Rota* witnesses most, but not all of King Eadwig's charters of 956, but ceases to witness Eadwig's diplomas late in that year. This fact makes the events of 957-8 all the more interesting.

The massive shift in loyalties that occurred during King Eadwig's short reign has been examined much more fully elsewhere, and many questions surrounding the reasons for Edgar's initial insurgency in Mercia remain.¹⁵² One thing that is assured is that there must certainly have been some heavy decisions to be made by the great men who supported either Eadwig or his younger brother Edgar, and the decision made by Athelstan *Rota* is a case in point; he may very well have been the first of King Eadwig's ealdormen to openly support Edgar in Mercia. Of the eleven extant charters from the year 957¹⁵³, some seven¹⁵⁴ can be positively identified as being issued before the majority of the ealdormen from districts north of the Thames ceased

¹⁵¹ For details of this period see Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 48-69.

¹⁵² For further discussion see Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 49-62; Stafford, *Unification and Conquest*; Williams, "Princeps merciorum gentis", 143-172; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 364-7; Banton, *Ealdormen and Earls*; and Shashi Jayakumar, *The Politics of the English Kingdom c.955-c.978*, (D Phil, Oxford, 2001).

¹⁵³ S 574, S 639, S 640-3, S 645-7, S 649 and S 1291.

¹⁵⁴ S 574, S 641, S 643, S 645-6, S 649 and S 1291.

witnessing.¹⁵⁵ Athelstan *Rota* witnesses none of these, a fact that may signify his early departure from Eadwig's court.¹⁵⁶ If Athelstan *Rota* was a close advisor to the ætheling Eadwig before his accession as is likely, than Edgar must have done something to secure his loyalty from King Eadwig, who had rewarded his new ealdormen so generously and so quickly.

Here one must remember also the relationship between King Eadwig and his grandmother, Eadgifu, whom he had deprived of all property upon taking the throne.¹⁵⁷ King Eadred, in his will, granted a large number of his personal estates to his mother, making her landed wealth very considerable indeed.¹⁵⁸ The young Eadwig appears to have resented this massive transfer of lands, feeling them to be his by right. The souring of Eadgifu's relationship with her grandson could have influenced Athelstan *Rota*'s decision to support Edgar over Eadwig. King Edgar eventually restored all of Eadgifu's property after he acceded to the throne of all of England in 959, so it is readily assumed that Eadgifu took shelter with, and supported politically, her younger grandson at this point.¹⁵⁹

King Eadwig's move against his grandmother was undoubtedly also connected with the sordid events surrounding his coronation feast. The earliest life of St

¹⁵⁵ The classification of charters from 956-7 into different meetings of the king's *witan* is based on Keynes' *Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters c. 670-1066*, Table L.

¹⁵⁶ S 574 contains the attestation of Athelstan *Rota*, but there are significant problems with the document. The charter is most likely spurious in its received form, but based on an authentic original. There remains some dispute over this. If his signature on this diploma is indeed wholly unreliable, it would appear that Athelstan *Rota* left Eadwig's court before 957, possibly as early as the end of 956. Athelstan *Rota*'s abnormally low attestation at the sixth place might reinforce the interpretation that the witness list is a fabrication. See Keynes, "The 'Dunstan B' charters", 176 n. 46; Hart, *The Danelaw*, 435; and P. Chaplais, "The Royal Anglo-Saxon 'Chancery' of the Tenth Century Revisited", *Studies in Medieval History presented to R.H.C. Davis*, H. Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (eds.), (London, 1985), 41-51, at 50 n.35.

¹⁵⁷ S 1211. See also *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, 92-3.

¹⁵⁸ S 1515. King Eadred's will, dated between 951-55, bequeathed lands at Amesbury, Wiltshire; Wantage, Berkshire; Basing, Hampshire; and all Eadred's personal booklands in Sussex, Surrey, and Kent. The estate at Basing was granted by King Edmund to Æthelnoth, his personal priest, in 945 (S 505), who subsequently passed it on to the New Minster, Winchester (S 1418) sometime between 946-53.

¹⁵⁹ S 1211.

Dunstan tells us that during said feast the young king was severely reprimanded by Dunstan, then abbot of Glastonbury, for cavorting lasciviously with a particularly unsavory mother and her daughter, when he should have been cavorting convivially with his nobles.¹⁶⁰ Eadwig went on to marry the daughter, Ælfgifu, but not before banishing Dunstan to the Continent. Dunstan's close alliance with Eadgifu is well documented, and Eadwig's removal of the two of them from positions of influence around him was a bold declaration of independence.

When examined in conjunction, it appears to have been a coordinated set of moves designed, at least partly, to allow him free rein in his choice of a wife. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* 'D's entry for 958 states that in that year, "Archbishop Oda divorced King Eadwig and Ælfgifu because they were related."¹⁶¹ Ælfgifu was the sister of Æthelweard, the ealdorman of the Western Shires, and the author of the Latin Chronicle mentioned above. He and his sister belonged to a collateral, and possibly competitive branch of the royal family, descended from King Alfred's brother Æthelred.¹⁶² Ælfgifu was King Eadwig's third cousin once removed, and while Archbishop Oda was technically in the right to dissolve the marriage on the grounds of consanguinity, it was still a highly controversial move.¹⁶³ It is surely no coincidence that Eadwig waited to marry the woman of his choice until after he had disinherited his grandmother of her landed wealth, and Oda's action is suggestive further of a close association between the archbishop and Eadgifu. It was to Christ

¹⁶⁰ *Vita Sancti Dunstani*, 96-9.

¹⁶¹ "Her on þissum geare Oda arcebiscop totwæmde Eadwi cyning 7 Ælgyfe, for þæm þe hi wæron to gesybbe."

¹⁶² *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, xii.

¹⁶³ *Vita Sancti Oswaldi*, 402-3.

Church, Canterbury that Eadgifu herself granted several estates c.959, possibly as thanks for help received from both Oda and Dunstan in her return to power.¹⁶⁴

To summarize: Athelstan *Rota* seems to have been one of Edgar's early supporters in his bid for the throne in 957, his departure from Eadwig's court possible evidence of a hurried re-assessment of his allegiances. Eadgifu was firmly behind the cause of her younger grandson Edgar after her disenfranchisement by Eadwig, who was expressing his independence by marrying into an extended and possibly competitive branch of the royal family, thus directly threatening Eadgifu's designs on the inviolability of the royal family. One can imagine a certain apprehension in court circles when members of the royal family disagreed so openly.

If Eadgifu had a hand in helping Athelstan *Rota* marry Æthelflæd of Damerham around this time, such a move could be interpreted as an example of her hopes of securing his loyalty for Edgar. The politics of the period are difficult to unravel, but if Athelstan *Rota* was the first of many to support Edgar in Mercia, his decision was likely due to some extenuating circumstances, possibly influenced by his advantageous marriage to Æthelflæd. Their marriage would have united Athelstan *Rota* with the royal family in a very specific context, through Æthelflæd's own family connections as well as her direct ties with Eadgifu. Athelstan *Rota*'s (?possibly hasty) decision to support Edgar would be an obvious indication of such an allegiance.

The evidence is admittedly circumstantial, but a speculative case can be made for suggesting that the marriage between Athelstan *Rota* and Æthelflæd of Damerham was a matter of practical political alliances, machinated primarily by Eadgifu, King Edgar and their common interests in or around the year 957-8. Their marriage would have united not only the families of Byrhtnoth, Athelstan *Rota*, and the extended kin

¹⁶⁴ S 1211.

of Ealdorman Ælfgar, but through Æthelflæd's previous marriage to King Edmund she carried with her a close familial relationship to the royal family as well as a degree of legitimacy from her status as an anointed queen.¹⁶⁵ Such a highly visible move would have been instrumental in demonstrating a level of familial cohesion and unity between powerful aristocratic groups during the turbulent period of King Eadwig's reign. Any consolidation of power around this time was no doubt meant for King Edgar's benefit. It seems highly unlikely that in such a context of strictly controlled marriage alliances that Æthelflæd of Damerham could have remarried without Eadgifu's sanction.

Such an interpretation could appear to fly in the face of the argument so far, that Eadgifu identified herself and the royal house as being a uniting symbol between the former kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia. However, it should be remembered that during the period 955-9 she was effectively excluded from the corridors of power, and her opportunities appear to have been severely limited. It is not suggested that Eadgifu would have encouraged the men of Mercia to support Edgar and formally support the split with Wessex, and it is more likely that she went along with the movement towards the separation of the kingdoms because it was the only viable option open to her. Also it should be recognized that if Athelstan *Rota* did marry Æthelflæd of Damerham around this time, it could be seen as a move to strengthen the aristocratic bonds between Mercia and eastern areas. Eadwig's disassociation of his mother could be seen in the context of his association with factions opposed to her designs, and Athelstan *Rota*'s conflicting and changing allegiances may have been the exception rather than the rule.

¹⁶⁵ As Æthelflæd had been a queen, any possible offspring could have conceivably contended for the throne at a later date. Eadgifu may have feared such an outcome, and by marrying her off to a close ally, she may have been removing her from any speculative bids for inheritable legitimacy in the future.

Whether he was the first ealdorman to support Edgar openly, the young king quickly rewarded Athelstan *Rota* with a grant of five hides at *Hamme* (East and West Ham, Essex) early in 958, perhaps one of his first official gifts as King of the Mercians. This could be seen as reinforcing Athelstan *Rota*'s associations within Essex. Unfortunately, there is little more to say about this individual. Information for Athelstan *Rota*'s activities in the 960s is essentially nonexistent, as is information on Æthelflæd of Damerham in her later years. He likely died c.970, and she a few decades later.

King Eadwig's death in 959 left Edgar free to assume the kingship of all of England, and it is possible that Eadgifu had some influence over the marriages of King Edgar in the years before her death. Edgar first married Æthelflæd 'Eneda' who may have had associations with Ealdorman Athelstan 'Half King'.¹⁶⁶ As mentioned above, Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King' was Edgar's foster father, and it was suggested that upon King Edmund's death it was Eadgifu who arranged the fostering. It was in Eadgifu's later years that Edgar married a second and a third time, and the circumstances surrounding his third marriage to Ælfthryth in 964 were suspicious.¹⁶⁷ Ælfthryth herself was also intimately entwined with those behind the monastic reform movement, and was a quite dynamic figure, as her role in Bishop Æthelwold's *Regularis Concordia* demonstrates.¹⁶⁸ Eadgifu's interest in royal marriage policy appears to have been an essential part of her overall concern for the reliability and stability of the royal succession, and her actions should be seen primarily in this context.

¹⁶⁶ See Hart, *The Danelaw*, 586-9.

¹⁶⁷ Ælfthryth was the daughter of Ealdorman Ordgar of Devon. She married first Æthelwold, ealdorman of East Anglia, and upon his death c.964 she married King Edgar.

¹⁶⁸ See Keynes, *The Diplomas of King Æthelred*, 164-74; and also Yorke, "Æthelwold and the politics of the tenth century", 81-6.

Conclusions

An analysis of King Edmund's marriages shows that relations with the local aristocracies of Wessex, Mercia and East Anglia were of the utmost importance to the royal family's designs over the control of the kingdom. Edmund's first wife Ælfgifu remains an enigmatic figure, seen more as a legend than an actual person just a few centuries after her death. She bore Edmund two sons, each of whom would grow up to become king in turn. Her sanctity is as much a mystery as her life and family background, and this severely hampers attempts at sketching an un-biased picture of her life. The legends surrounding her suggest a pious, penitent figure, hardly the sort who would be expected to marry and bear a king's children. At the same time, a young king such as Edmund could hardly have been expected to marry a nun. The evidence is limited, but there are suggestions that her family was part of the ecclesiastical elite of Wessex. Ælfgifu was closely associated with a great many female religious, as demonstrated by her connections with the community at Shaftesbury. It was most likely in the milieu of this religious establishment that she and the young king were introduced, almost assuredly at the instigation of Eadgifu, who was especially keen on endowing women's religious institutions and the English church in general.

It was in perhaps a similar background, in East Anglia and Essex as opposed to the West Saxon heartland, that first brought King Edmund and the eldest daughter of a prominent local landowner named Ælfgar together. Ælfgar's entire family is notable for its generous donations to religious institutions, and the comparison with what little is known of Ælfgifu's family is readily apparent. While it is difficult to wrestle details from the available evidence concerning Ælfgifu's political

significance, it is clear that Æthelflæd was a woman worth having. At the very least, her family was one worth being related to, as the list of prominent men having matrimonial ties to Ælfgar's two daughters shows.¹⁶⁹

Eadgifu no doubt realized the advantages to be had by allying her own family and Ælfgar's, and Edmund's remarriage to Æthelflæd is a visible sign of this. The fact that King Edmund was allying himself so closely with a kin group from the east is important, as it can be related to the visible shift during his reign from the royal reliance on a West Saxon power base to a more broadly based Mercian and eastern one. All the evidence points toward Eadgifu having had a pronounced influence over the matrimonial choices of her offspring throughout the decades of her sons' and grandsons' reigns, and this could be seen as a part of an enduring strategy of accord between Mercia and Wessex being bolstered through royal marriages with prominent locals at politically sensitive times.

Circumstantial at times as it is, the evidence points toward Eadgifu having had a pronounced influence over the matrimonial choices of her offspring over the course of her life. Throughout the reigns of her husband, sons and grandsons, Eadgifu appears as an exceptionally vibrant and imposing figure. Her fortunes were intimately entangled with the inviolability of the royal house, as from the time of

¹⁶⁹ As to how and in what way King Edmund's two wives may have influenced him while he reigned, little can be determined. Both Ælfgifu and Æthelflæd received grants of lands, and their families were not left out. Ælfgar was well rewarded with his ornate sword and his subsequent promotion to the ealdorship of Essex, and Ælfgifu's family interests surrounding Shaftesbury were also well endowed. In Edmund's marital relationships a high level of closeness and unity can be observed, a theme that has been stressed regarding the royal family as a whole at this time. Edmund's two wives' extremely generous piety, as well as their close associations to some of the early principal players in what would become the Benedictine Reform movement, no doubt had some effect on the king. Ælfgar's family's connections with Canterbury and to Bishop Theodred of London have been noted, and it has been suggested that the probable year of King Edmund's marriage to Æthelflæd of Damerham coincides nicely with the arrival and installment at Bath of refugee Breton monks from St Bertin in 944. See Wareham, *Lords and Communities in Early Medieval East Anglia*, 54; and also Dumville, *Wessex and England from Alfred to Edgar*, 173-84, at 176.

King Athelstan's reign she would have been able to see what happened when male heirs competed for the throne.¹⁷⁰

Perhaps also important, Eadgifu's own family history was tied up in the difficulties that could be encountered when there was a disputed throne; her own father had been killed while establishing dynastic security for both Wessex and Mercia. Kings Athelstan and Eadred having not married, Edmund's remarriage after his first wife's death and the re-marriage of Edmund's widow to Athelstan *Rota*, the sensational dissolution of King Eadwig's marriage and King Edgar's marriage to Ælfthryth; all these details point to the distinct possibility that Eadgifu was the royal wedding planner. All of her visible actions and associations suggest that the protection of the family's marriage policy was one of her highest priorities, and it is put forward that Eadgifu likely considered herself the guardian of one of the cornerstones of England's still developing unity, the royal succession. In addition to protecting her own position and that of her family, her actions appear to have been instrumental in maintaining the smooth organization of England in its formative years. Her authority over the marriage policies of her sons and grandsons was perhaps her most important legacy.

¹⁷⁰ Whether or not King Athelstan actually set his half-brother Edwin out on a boat in the middle of the English Channel without oars, there appears to have been some sort of plot afoot at court which ultimately resulted in Edwin's death. Edmund would have been old enough to remember this event in 933, and one can also imagine Eadgifu learning valuable lessons from it. See *Gesta Regum Anglorum*, 225-8

Chapter VII

Conclusions

This dissertation has addressed not just a single obscure Anglo-Saxon king, but also the many other personalities, themes, and events that surrounded his life and times. At such a distant remove from the time at which he lived, any attempt at constructing a complete picture of King Edmund's reign is fraught with difficulty. Foremost amongst the various problems encountered is the relative lack of evidence. King Edmund was praised and remembered fondly in his own time and to a certain extent after, but his short reign in time became little more than a footnote to most historians. Even as late as the twelfth century, when William of Malmesbury was writing, King Edmund was not much more than an also-ran alongside the much richer and exalted periods of his elder brother Athelstan and son Edgar.

Throughout this dissertation several themes have permeated the discussion to such a degree that they warrant further clarity. When he assumed the throne after the death of King Athelstan, Edmund had some mighty shoes to fill. It can never be known precisely if Edmund knew what he was getting himself into, but it does appear that he did so with cautious confidence. The fact that King Edmund appears to have married soon after taking the throne is perhaps telling of his relationship with his great men at this time; their confidence in him, not to mention other members of his family, could partially lie behind his taking a wife and having children when he did. That Edmund was quick to produce an heir would have quelled certain anxieties no doubt felt, as the years under Athelstan may have been stressful ones when it came to the question of who would succeed the childless king. Despite the initial disappointment in dealing with Anlaf Gothfrithsson, there is the suggestion that Edmund and his lieutenants responded vigorously, accepting a treaty only after being tactically

outmanoeuvred towards the end of the campaign in 940. That Edmund seemingly rebounded so well after such a defeat should perhaps be seen as a testament to his ability to maintain the loyalty of his great men.

The picture that emerges both during and after the Five Boroughs campaign is perhaps the most enigmatic. It was an event that, even at the time as now, was imbued with diverse sensibilities such as national pride, ethnic, religious and linguistic differences, and the imposition of authority at various levels. This was King Edmund's triumph, and it was more than just a military one. In the aftermath he may very well have been forgiven wholly for the 940 episode by his contemporaries. He was portrayed as a defender at Brunanburh, and then re-invented as a conqueror and an integrator.

In Edmund a great dichotomy is observed; his communications, such as we have them, are either extremely formal or distinctly personal. His lawmaking voice is both traditional and innovative; the codes themselves are, to use Wormald's words, very much "...an abject lesson in the variety of Anglo-Saxon legal texts"¹. Everywhere one sees King Edmund surrounded by his councillors, especially Archbishop Oda and his own immediate family. It is through an examination of these peripheral personalities that one gets a better sense of who Edmund was and how he ruled. It is only in the poetry found in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* that King Edmund appears as a dynamic, forceful persona, the kind of warrior-king students of Anglo-Saxon England are all more familiar with. It is important to remember that such a romantic view likely reflects what contemporaries wanted to portray, not what was; yet it remains an extremely attractive depiction.

¹ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, 312.

Cooperation between the royal authority and the local is another main theme that appears to have permeated King Edmund's reign, and has united many of the arguments presented. Throughout the course of his reign, Edmund appears to have constantly reassessed his relationships with his great men; this fact is made quite clear by the charter evidence. What is less clear is his motivation for doing so. There are many different ways of interpreting the myriad promotions and advancements made by individuals and recognized power blocks over both the long and the shorter term. The present investigation has, it is admitted, looked for answers to questions of what was transpiring in the shorter term, as one assumption has been that Anglo-Saxon kings generally tended to make many of their decisions based on immediate political concerns.

On two separate occasions King Edmund appears to have promoted a large number of men to high court positions to replace others who disappear, and while this likely had much to do with administrative concerns, there is also the implication that a younger, more energetic group of men were advancing to the forefront at the expense of entrenched parties, possibly with differing interpretations of how the kingdom was to be governed. The individuals whom the king promoted and kept close to his presence, so far as can be determined from his diplomas, had many concerns and local interests of their own. Many of those who disappear seem to have been from Wessex, and those promoted were overwhelmingly from Mercia and East Anglia. Prior to the Five Boroughs campaign, Mercia appears to have been King Edmund's major priority, and his promotion of a large number of ealdormen in the region early on in his reign is balanced by his apparent focus on the administration of Wessex after c.943.

One wonders just how much King Edmund was a free agent in this regard, and the line between royal fiat and response to local pressures is a fine one. Edmund appears to project a royal image in abstract terms; the representation is of a strong king ruling diverse areas and peoples as a detached, sovereign leader, tackling problems as they emerged. Edmund appears keen to delegate his authority, perhaps because circumstances required such action. What remains to be seen is whether he was delegating so considerably because it was immediately necessary, because he believed that it was what an English “emperor” was supposed to do, or whether such moves were carried out *de facto* with his acquiescence. At the risk of being accused of fence sitting, it is felt likely that these were all contributing factors. This aside, the evidence points to Edmund’s policies towards the different regions subject to his control being balanced on the one hand by increased delegation and local control, and on the other hand by his own increasing royal authority. It was through these two analogous agencies that King Edmund governed, and the parallel with his own seemingly dichotomous royal personality is striking.

Great changes were afoot after the northern areas of Mercia and the Danelaw were annexed, and some of them can be observed. After a period of apparent avoidance of Mercian issues under King Athelstan, King Edmund was reorienting his kingdom’s attention towards the north, and the old kingdom of Mercia was increasingly a priority of the West Saxon administrative machine.² The majority of individuals and great landowning families that benefited in both administrative power as well as landed wealth were Mercian and East Anglian. The families of Ealdorman

² The English coinage also appears to have undergone changes once King Edmund took the throne, and it has been shown that certain types common under Athelstan produced in Wessex ceased to be produced. Certain other types of coins became more common in East Anglia and Eastern Mercia, and while it cannot be proven, such changes may be related to the redemption of the Five Boroughs. The seeming abandonment of southern traditions is noticed, and the preponderance of organizational changes and the royal reliance on new men in these areas points to a significant shift in centralized administrative policy.

Ealhhelm and Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half King', while already close to Edmund from his accession, increasingly became the pillars on which Edmund reinforced his royal authority in the newly conquered areas. These great Mercian and East Anglian families would dominate English politics for decades to come, as King Edmund reinforced their power not only in their native bases of power but throughout Wessex as well.

The context of their advancement at court is of the utmost importance, and one would do well to consider closely Ealdorman Æthelstan 'Half-King's by-name. The sources are silent as to precisely when over the course of his lifetime he earned this title, or if it was a widely recognized one. The fact that such a designation exists at all is perhaps symptomatic of his family's rise to power throughout the 940s, and there are strong indications that royal patronage in their favour was bestowed at the expense of competitive factions at King Edmund's court. The existence of significant divisions amongst the great and the good in England at this time, seemingly regional ones, suggests that strong differences were being voiced at the highest levels of government, and the royal family was caught in the middle.

But again, the secular magnates could not have performed their duties without cooperation from the religious sphere. It is at roughly the same time as the Five Boroughs campaign that one observes the restoration and promotion of Dunstan to the abbacy of Glastonbury, and King Edmund's seeming 180-degree reversal of policy towards this most influential individual deserves special comment. Whether or not King Edmund underwent a profound personal experience, something changed significantly around this time that prompted him to increasingly engage with the church when it came to administrative details. This may or may not have been related to King Edmund's court shake-up during these years, but it resonates with a

significant shift in royal policy, perhaps made possible only once entrenched interests were removed from power. A gathering sense of cooperation was developing amongst churchmen in King Edmund's England.

Perhaps a great deal of these changes can be attributed to the influence of Archbishop Oda of Canterbury, who from his appointment in 941 became perhaps King Edmund's most vocal supporter and collaborator in government. Their close association is shown by an examination of King Edmund's legislative output, much of which can be connected directly to Oda's mindset and viewpoint. Perhaps it was Oda, with his interest in Carolingian-era ecclesiastical law, who helped to shape King Edmund's own outlook and policies. Together they continued the process initiated by King Athelstan, to promote through legislation administrative functionality and support between the secular and religious spheres in the localities. At the same time they augmented such designs to deal with changing circumstances, and appear to have supported a stronger royal authority within existing and developing means of local administrative organization. Edmund's laws reflect contemporary concerns, and they show a king trying at once to innovate and also to toe the line of West-Saxon legislative tradition. Perhaps, and this is a very tenuous suggestion, the reason that King Eadred produced no legislation is a sign of King Edmund's laws being effective and well received.

King Edmund was keen on not only keeping the kingdom in order however, and he also had his own royal image well in mind. It was the combination of the promotion of not only the growing partnership between ealdormen and bishops as local administrators, but also their mutual promotion of the king as a further removed figure on a pedestal. If this premise of increased royal authority is to be understood in the context of the development of England being administered as a single,

amalgamated kingdom, it is impossible to divorce the role played by the royal family itself. During King Edmund's reign and for some years after, there existed in the English royal family perhaps one of the strongest examples of familial cohesion and direction in tenth-century England. Not only did Eadgifu secure the loyalty of influential churchmen, her influence can be seen shaping the West Saxon marriage policy possibly from as early as 926, as her role in the marriages of King Athelstan's sisters is highly likely. Her role as matriarch only grew during the reigns of her sons. This is made abundantly clear by King Edmund's conspicuous two marriages, each with their own immediate political and regional considerations, and likely lies behind King Eadred's childlessness. Eadgifu gained her power and influence not only through her royal progeny, but also from her strong character and her ability to create close alliances with prominent churchmen, most prominent amongst them Archbishop Oda, Bishop Theodred, Abbot Dunstan and later Bishop Æthelwold.

Indeed, Eadgifu, Edmund and Eadred appear as an increasingly unified front as King Edmund's reign progressed, as has been argued elsewhere. Eadgifu and Eadred's respective diploma attestations show their keen collective interest in influencing court proceedings, and their changing order of attestation in 943-4 could be evidence of Eadred's growing in authority at his brother's side. There are hints and intimations that suggest such cohesion and unity within the royal family was in reaction to some external threat, and this brings one back to the growth of faction at court; the royal family may not have been "circling the wagons", but perhaps an element of resoluteness in the face of conflict was at hand in this respect. With the promotion of royal authority an ongoing concern, the royal family needed to maintain the congruence and steadfastness needed to match image with reality.

But what of the reality? As illustrated throughout this dissertation, King Edmund's reign is fraught with difficulties of interpretation, and when not being ignored he is generally credited with continuing the policies of his forbears. That is, his reign is often seen as a small part of the grand narrative of West-Saxon expansion towards a united England, a period of great military energy and the ghosts of continuous administrative activity. King Edmund is portrayed as a monarch with his attention focused largely outside of his kingdom; his was a time of unrelenting purpose in the expansion and control of English "imperial" dominions. Indeed, a cursory examination of the significant *narrative* events of Edmund's reign supports such an interpretation. However, the present thesis has attempted to demonstrate that England in the early 940s was not solely intent on subjecting the various kingdoms and sub-kingdoms on the island of Albion to West Saxon domination, nor that King Edmund was following a preordained track laid down by his ancestors since the time of Alfred.

The security of Wessex and Mercia against external threat was indeed a concern, as it always had been, but it was not the only matter of the day. If the diverse peoples and areas under English control were to be not only free from invasion, but internally peaceful as well, the great and good of the localities needed to be enlisted to maintain the authority necessary to project the likeness of a strong, integrated kingdom. King Athelstan's approach to this problem was to centralize authority within the person of the king to a superlative degree, and this was Edmund's inheritance; but Edmund appears only partly bound by (or, indeed, permitted to retain) the power amassed by his predecessors. It is this aspect of King Edmund's reign, the development of the relationships between the king, the church and the aristocracy in the governing of the kingdom that emerges from the present examination as the

primary activity occupying the English during these turbulent years. Edmund retained much in the way of royal prerogative, but appears just as inclined, or perhaps encouraged, to engage the local secular and ecclesiastical authorities in the management of the realm.

Returning to his legislation for a moment, II Edmund states (and do not these sound like the words of a king?) "...I thank God and all of you, who have given me full support, for the immunity from thefts which we now enjoy. I therefore confidently expect of you, that you will be all the more willing to give your support towards this [maintenance of the public peace], in proportion as its observance is a more urgent matter for us all."³ Here King Edmund not only recognizes publicly the backing of his supporters, but also demonstrates royal trust and confidence in them for a new project; civic harmony and the elimination of the feud is the next step now that theft has been dealt with, and it was everybody's responsibility. Perhaps the great magnates did not yet entirely subscribe to the idea of a fully united kingdom; indeed, one wonders if Edmund did himself, but he does appear to be keen on encouraging those with varied interests to work together towards the common weal. One sees here a dutiful governor, managing his kingdom to the best of his ability, approaching the problems of the day and dealing with them methodically. Eric John has said of King Edmund, in whose work inspired the title of the present thesis, "Edmund himself is something of an enigma. He did restore the kingdom his brother had left but one cannot help but feel he had an easier task and performed it in a more laboured manner."⁴ To this should perhaps be added that the laboured manner by which Edmund governed suggests not an easier task than the one faced by his predecessors, but one significantly different.

³ *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*, 10-11.

⁴ Eric John, *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England* (Manchester, 1996), 95.

There are many questions that this dissertation has not answered, nor attempted to answer. Many questions of cultural development, such as literature, representational art and architecture have been ignored, on account of a lack of directly contemporary evidence. The coinage from King Edmund's reign has been addressed in certain contexts, but a systematic, detailed analysis lies beyond the scope of the present investigation. This perhaps represents the greatest corpus of potential source material, at least by number, from King Edmund's reign that remains so lightly examined. It is the investigation of these documents, many of which contain the only portraits of King Edmund (albeit stylised), which would help to realize more fully the still blurry picture of his reign. How was King Edmund reorganizing his currency alongside the changing administrative picture? Can any attempts be made to reconcile the landed economy with the cash? These are questions historians would most like to know, but the focus on these problems will have to lie at the foot of future scholarship.

Bibliography

Primary Sources:

1. Anderson, A.O. (ed.). *Early Sources of Scottish History A.D. 500-1286*. (2 Vols., Stamford, 1990).
2. Arnold, Thomas (ed.). *Symeonis monachi opera omnia in Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores; or, Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland During the Middle Ages*. (London, 1858-1911).
3. Attenborough, F.L. (ed. and trans.). *The Laws of the Earliest English Kings*. (Cambridge, 1922).
4. Baker, Peter S. (ed.). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*. Vol. 8, MS. F. (Cambridge, 2000).
5. Bately, Janet M. (ed.). *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*. Vol. 3, MS. A. (Bury St. Edmunds, 1986).
6. Birch, Walter De Gray., (ed.). *Cartularium Saxonicum: A Collection of Charters Relating to Anglo-Saxon History*. (3 Vols., London, 1887).
7. Blake E.O. (ed.). *Liber Eliensis*. Camden Third Series, Volume XCII. (London, 1962).
8. Blunt, C.E., B. H.I.H. Stewart and C. S.S. Lyon. *Coinage in Tenth-Century England From Edward the Elder to Edgar's Reform*. (Oxford, 1989).
9. Brooks, N and S.E. Kelly (eds.). *The Charters of Christ Church, Canterbury*. (Oxford, Forthcoming).
10. Campbell, A. (ed.). *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*. (London, 1962).
11. Campbell, A., (ed.). *Charters of Rochester*. Anglo Saxon Charters I. (London, 1973).
12. Conner, Patrick W. (ed.). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*. Vol. 10, The Abingdon Chronicle, A.D. 956-1066 (MS. C, With Reference to BDE). (Cambridge, 1996).
13. Cubbin, G.P. (ed.). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*. Vol. 6, MS. D. (Cambridge, 1996).
14. Darlington, R.R. and P. McGurk (eds.). *The chronicle of John of Worcester*. Translated by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk. (3 Vols., Oxford, 1995).
15. Fairweather, Janet (trans.). *Liber Eliensis: A History of the Isle of Ely From the Seventh Century to the Twelfth*. (Woodbridge, 2005).

16. Fanning, Steven and Bernard S. Bachrach (eds. and trans.). *The Annals of Flodoard of Reims, 919-966*. (Toronto, 2004).
17. Finberg, H.P.R. (ed.). *The Early Charters of the West Midlands*. (Leicester, 1961).
18. Finberg, H.P.R. (ed.). *The Early Charters of Wessex*. (Leicester, 1964).
19. Gelling, Margaret (ed.). *The Early Charters of The Thames Valley*. (Bristol, 1979).
20. Gibbs, M. *Early Charters of the Cathedral Church of St Paul, London*. (Camden Third Series, lviii, 1939).
21. Giles, J.A. (ed.). *Roger of Wendover's Flowers of History*. (London, 1849)
22. Godman, Peter (ed.). *Alcuin: The Bishops, Kings, and Saints of York*. (Oxford, 1982).
23. Haddan, A.W. and W. Stubbs (eds.). *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents Relating to Great Britain and Ireland*. (3 Vols., Oxford, 1869-78).
24. Harmer, F.E. (ed.). *Select English Historical Documents of the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*. (Cambridge, 1914).
25. Harmer, F.E. (ed.). *Anglo-Saxon Writs*. (Manchester, 1952).
26. Hart, C.R. (ed.). *The Early Charters of Eastern England*. (Leicester, 1966).
27. Hart, C.R. (ed.). *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands*. (Leicester, 1975).
28. *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto: A History of Saint Cuthbert and a Record of His Patrimony*. Ted Johnson South (ed.). (Cambridge, 2002).
29. Ingram, J. (trans). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. (London, 1912).
30. Irvine, Susan (ed.). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*. Vol. 7, MS. E. (Cambridge, 2004).
31. Kemble, J.M. (ed.). *Codex Diplomaticus Aevi Saxonici*. (6 Vols., London, 1839-48).
32. Kelly, S.E. (ed.). *Charters of St Augustine's Abbey Canterbury and Minster-in-Thamet*. Anglo-Saxon Charters IV. (Oxford, 1995).
33. Kelly, S.E. (ed.). *Charters of Shaftesbury Abbey*. Anglo-Saxon Charters V. (Oxford, 1996).

34. Kelly, S.E. (ed.). *Charters of Selsey*. Anglo-Saxon Charters VI. (Oxford, 1998).
35. Kelly S.E. (ed.). *Charters of Abingdon Abbey 1*. Anglo-Saxon Charters VII. (Oxford, 2000).
36. Kelly, S.E. (ed.). *Charters of Abingdon Abbey 2*. Anglo-Saxon Charters VIII. (Oxford, 2001).
37. Kelly, S.E. (ed.). *Charters of St Paul's, London*. Anglo-Saxon Charters X. (Oxford, 2004).
38. Kelly, S.E. (ed.). *Charters of Malmesbury Abbey*. Anglo-Saxon Charters XI. (Oxford, 2006).
39. Keynes, Simon and Michael Lapidge (eds.). *Alfred The Great. Asser's Life of King Alfred and other contemporary sources*. (Harmondsworth, 1983).
40. Keynes, Simon (ed.). *An Atlas of Attestations in Anglo-Saxon Charters c. 670-1066*. (Circulated Privately, 2002).
41. Lapidge, Michael and Michael Winterbottom (eds.). *Wulfstan of Winchester, The Life of St Æthelwold*. (Oxford, 1991).
42. Liebermann, F. *Die Gesetze der Angelsachen*. (3 Vols., Halle, 1903-16).
43. Mac Airt, Seán and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (eds.). *The Annals of Ulster*. (Dublin, 1983).
44. Miller, Sean (ed.). *Charters of the New Minster, Winchester*. Anglo-Saxon Charters IX. (Oxford, 2001).
45. Mosen, Erling (ed. and trans. with A.H. Smith). *Heimskringla, or the Lives of the Norse Kings by Snorre Sturlason*. (Cambridge, 1932).
46. Muir, B.J. (ed.). *A Pre-Conquest English Prayer Book (BL MSS Cotton Galba A.xiv and Nero A.ii (ff. 3-13))*. Henry Bradshaw Society, 103. (Woodbridge, 1988).
47. Mynors, R.A.B. (ed. and trans.). *William of Malmesbury. Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings*. (2 Vols., Oxford, 1998).
48. O'Brien O'Keefe, Katherine (ed.). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition*. Vol. 5, MS. C. (Cambridge, 2001).
49. O'Donovan, John (ed. and trans.). *Annala Rioghachachta Eireann / annals of the Kingdom of Ireland by the four masters from the earliest period to the year 1616*. (2 Vols., Dublin 1851).

50. O'Donovan, M.A. (ed.). *Charters of Sherborne*. Anglo-Saxon Charters III. (Oxford, 1988).
51. Osbert of Clare. *Vita et translacione et miraculis beatae virginis Abburgae premissa* (ca. 1140). Oxford, Bodleian Library MS. Laud. Misc. 114, ff. 85- '120'.
52. Pálsson, Herman (trans.). *Egil's Saga*. (Harmondsworth, 1976).
53. Plummer, Charles (ed.). *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel, with Supplementary Extracts from the Others. A Revised Text on the Basis of an Edition by John Earle*. (2 Vols., Oxford, 1892/9).
54. Preest, David (ed. and trans.). William of Malmesbury. *The deeds of the Bishops of England (Gesta pontificum anglorum)*. (Woodbridge, 2002).
55. Raine, J. (ed.). *The Historians of the Church of York and its Archbishops I*. (London, 1879).
56. Robertson, A.J. (ed.). *The Laws of the Kings of England from Edmund to Henry I*. (Cambridge, 1925).
57. Robertson, A.J. (ed.). *Anglo-Saxon Charters*. (Cambridge, 1956).
58. Robertson, J. (ed.). *The Church Historians of England*. Vol. II, Part I. (London, 1853).
59. Robertson, J. (ed.). *The Church Historians of England*. Vol. II, Part II. (London, 1854).
60. Rollason, David (ed. and trans.). *Symeon of Durham, Libellus de Exordio Atque Procursu Istius, Hoc Est Dunhelmensis Ecclesie* (Tract on the Origins and Progress of this the Church of Durham). (Oxford, 2000).
61. Sawyer, P. H. (ed.). *Anglo-Saxon charters: an annotated list and bibliography*. (London, 1968).
62. Sawyer, P.H. (ed.). *Charters of Burton Abbey*. Anglo-Saxon Charters II. (Oxford, 1979).
63. Simeon of Durham; Arnold, Thomas (ed.). "Symeonis monachi opera omnia in *Rerum Britannicarum Medii Aevi Scriptores*"; or, *Chronicles and Memorials of Great Britain and Ireland During the Middle Ages*. (London, 1858-1911).
64. Stevenson, J. (ed.). *The Church Historians of England*. Vol. III. (London, 1858).
65. Stubbs, William (ed.). *Memorials of Saint Dunstan, Archbishop of Canterbury*. (London, 1874).

66. Swanton, Michael (ed. and trans.). *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. (London, 1996).
67. Sweet, H. (ed.). *King Alfred's West Saxon Version of Gregory's Pastoral Care*. EETS o.s. 45, 50. (London, 1871).
68. Thorpe, B. (ed.). *The Homilies of the Anglo-Saxon Church*. (2 Vols., London, 1844-6).
69. Turner, Andrew J. and Bernard J. Muir (ed. and trans.). *Eadmer of Canterbury, Lives and Miracles of Saints Oda, Dunstan, and Oswald*. (Oxford, 2006).
70. Williams, Ann, and G.H. Martin (ed. and trans.). *Domesday Book: A Complete Translation*. (London, 1992).
71. Williams, I. (ed.). *Armes Prydein: The Prophecy of Britain*. (Dublin, 1972).
72. Williams Ab Ithel, John (ed.). *Annales Cambriae*. (London, 1860).
73. Winterbottom, M. (ed.). *Three Lives of English Saints*. Medieval Latin Texts I. (Toronto, 1972).
74. Whitelock, D. (ed.). *Anglo-Saxon Wills*. (Cambridge, 1930).
75. Whitelock, D, Neil Ker, and Lord Rennell (eds.). "The Will of Æthelgifu." (Oxford, 1968).
76. Whitelock, D. (ed.). *English Historical Documents c.500-1042 I*. 2nd Ed. (London, 1979).
77. Whitelock, D. (et al, ed.). *Councils and Synods, With Other Documents Relating to The English Church I*. Part I, A.D. 871-1204. (Oxford, 1981).

Secondary Sources.

78. Abrams, Lesley. *Anglo-Saxon Glastonbury: Church and Endowment*. Studies in Anglo-Saxon History VIII. (Woodbridge, 1996).
79. Angus, W.S. "The Chronology of the Reign of Edward the Elder." *English Historical Review* 53 (1938). 194-210.
80. Bandel, Betty. "The English Chroniclers' Attitude Toward Women." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 16, No. 1 (January, 1955). 113-18.
81. Banton, Nicholas. *Ealdormen and Earls in England from the Reign of King Alfred to the Reign of Æthelred II*. D.Phil. (Oxford, 1981).

82. Barker, E.E. "The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle Used by Æthelweard." *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 40 (1967). 74-91.
83. Barker, E.E. "Two Lost Documents of King Athelstan." *Anglo-Saxon England* 6 (1977). 137-43.
84. Barlow, Frank. *The English Church, 1000-1066: A Constitutional History*. (London, 1963).
85. Baxter, Stephen. "The Earls of Mercia and their Commended Men in the mid Eleventh Century." *Anglo-Norman Studies* 23 (2001). 23-46.
86. Beaven, Murray L.R. "King Edmund I and the Danes of York." *English Historical Review* 33 (1918). 1-9.
87. *Biographical Dictionary of Dark Age Britain, A: England, Scotland and Wales c. 500-c. 1050*. Ann Williams, Alfred P. Smyth and D.P. Kirby (eds.). (London, 1991).
88. Blair, John. "A Saint for Every Minster? Local Cults in Anglo-Saxon England." *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds.). (Oxford, 2002). 455-94.
89. Blair, John. "A Handlist of Anglo-Saxon Saints." *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds.). (Oxford, 2002). 495-565.
90. Blunt, C.E. "The Crowned Bust Coinage of Edmund 939-946." *British Numismatic Journal* 40 (1971). 17-21.
91. Blunt, C.E. "The Coinage of Athelstan, King of England 924-939." *British Numismatic Journal* 42 (1974). 35-158.
92. Bolton, W.F. "'Variation' in the Battle of Brunanburh." *The Review of English Studies*. New Series, Vol. 19, No. 76 (November, 1968). 363-72.
93. Braswell, Laurel. "Saint Edburga of Winchester: a study of her cult, a.d. 950-1500, with an edition of the fourteenth-century Middle English and Latin lives." *Mediaeval Studies* 33 (1971). 292-333.
94. Bredehoft, Thomas A. *Textual Histories: Readings in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. (Toronto, 2001).
95. Breeze, Andrew. "Armes Prydein, Hywel Dda, and the Reign of Edmund of Wessex." *Etudes Celtiques* 33 (1996). 209-22.
96. Brett, Caroline. "A Breton Pilgrim in England in the reign of King Æthelstan." *France and the British Isles in the Middle Ages and Renaissance*. Jondorf, Gillian and D.N. Dumville (eds.). (Woodbridge, 1991). 43-70.

97. Brooke, Christopher. *The Saxon and Norman Kings*. (London, 1963).
98. Brooks, Nicholas. *The Early History of the Church of Canterbury*. (Leicester, 1984).
99. Brooks, Nicholas. "The Career of St. Dunstan." *St. Dunstan: His Life, Times and Cult*. Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Tim Tatton-Brown (eds.). (Woodbridge, 1992). 1-23.
100. Cam, H.M. "Manerium cum Hundredo: The Hundred and the Hundredal Manor." *English Historical Review* 47, No. 187 (July, 1932). 353-76.
101. Campbell, A. "Two Notes on the Norse Kingdoms in Northumbria." *English Historical Review* 57 (1942). 85-97.
102. Campbell, J. *The Anglo-Saxon State*. (London, 2000).
103. Chadwick, Hector Munro. *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*. (Cambridge, 1905).
104. Chaney, William A. "Anglo-Saxon Church Dues: A Study in Historical Continuity." *Church History* 32, No. 3 (September, 1963). 268-77.
105. Chaney, William A. "The Economics of Ruler-Cult in Anglo-Saxon England." *The Journal of British Studies* 4, No. 2 (May, 1965). 1-17.
106. Chaney, William A. *The Cult of Kingship in Anglo-Saxon England: The Transition from Paganism to Christianity*. (Manchester, 1970).
107. Chaplais, P. "The Authenticity of the Royal Anglo-Saxon Diplomas of Exeter." *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 39 (1966). 1-34.
108. Chaplais, P. "The Royal Anglo-Saxon 'Chancery' of the Tenth Century Revisited." *Studies in Medieval History presented to R.H.C. Davis*. H. Mayr-Harting and R.I. Moore (eds.). (London, 1985). 41-51.
109. Coates, Simon. "The Bishop as Benefactor and Civic Patron: Alcuin, York, and Episcopal Authority in Anglo-Saxon England." *Speculum* 71. (1996). 529-558.
110. Cooper, Alan. "The Rise and Fall of the Anglo-Saxon Law of the Highway." *Haskins Society Journal* 12 (2003). 39-69.
111. Costen, M.D. "Dunstan, Glastonbury and the Economy of Somerset in the Tenth Century." *St. Dunstan, his Life, Times and Cult*. Nigel Ramsay, Margaret Sparks and Tim Tatton-Brown (eds.). (Woodbridge, 1992). 24-44.

112. Crick, Julia. "Women, Posthumous Benefaction, and Family Strategy in Pre-Conquest England." *The Journal of British Studies* 38, No. 4 (October, 1999). 399-422.
113. Crick, Julia. "Men, women and widows: widowhood in pre-Conquest England." *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*. S. Cavallo and L. Warner (eds.). (Harlow, 1999). 24-36.
114. Cubitt, Catherine. *Anglo-Saxon Church Councils c.650-c.850*. (London, 1995).
115. Cubitt, Catherine. "Universal and Local Saints in Anglo-Saxon England." *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds.). (Oxford, 2002). 423-53.
116. Cubitt, Catherine. "The clergy in early Anglo-Saxon England." *Historical Research* 78, no. 201 (August, 2005). 273-87.
117. Danet, Brenda & Bryna Bogoch. "'Whoever Alters This, May God Turn His Face from Him on the Day of Judgment': Curses in Anglo-Saxon Legal Documents." *The Journal of American Folklore* 105, No. 416 (Spring, 1992). 132-65.
118. Darlington, R.R. and Patrick McGurk. "The Chronicon ex Chronicis of 'Florence' of Worcester and its use of sources for English History Before 1066." *Anglo-Norman Studies* 5. (1982). 185-96.
119. Davidson, Michael R. *Submission and imperium in the early medieval Insular World*. Ph.D. (University of Edinburgh, 2002).
120. Dolley, R.H.M. "The Post-Brunanburh Viking Coinage of York." *Nordisk Numismatisk Årsskrift*. (1957-8). 13-88.
121. Dolley, R.H.M. and D.M. Metcalf. "The Reform of the English Coinage under Edgar." *Anglo-Saxon Coins: Studies Presented to F.M. Stenton on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday*, R.H.M. Dolley (ed.). (London, 1961). 136-68.
122. Downham, Clare. "The Chronology of the Last Scandinavian Kings of York, AD 937-954." *Northern History* 40 (2003). 25-51.
123. Drögereit, R. "Gab es eine angelsächsische Königskanzlei?" *Archiv für Urkundenforschung* 13 (1935). 335-436.
124. Dumville, David. "The Ætheling: a Study in Anglo-Saxon Constitutional History." *Anglo Saxon England* 8 (1979). 1-33.
125. Dumville, David. "Brittany and <<Armes Prydein Vawr>>." *Etudes Celtiques* 20 (1983). 145-159.

126. Dumville, David. *Wessex and England From Alfred to Edgar: Six Essays on Political, Cultural, and Ecclesiastical Revival*. (Woodbridge, 1992).
127. Dumville, David. *English Caroline Script and Monastic History*. (Woodbridge, 1993).
128. Dumville, David. "English Square Minuscule Script: The Mid-Century Phases." *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1993). 113-164.
129. Edwards, H. *The Charters of the Early West Saxon Kingdom*. British Archaeological Reports, British ser. cxviii. (Oxford, 1988).
130. Farmer, David Hugh. *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*. (Oxford, 1978).
131. Finberg, H.P.R. "The House of Ordgar and the Foundation of Tavistock Abbey." *English Historical Review* 58 (1943). 190-201.
132. Finberg, H.P.R. *Lucerna: Studies of Some Problems in the Early History of England*. (London, 1964).
133. Fleming, Robin. *Kings and Lords in Conquest England*. (Cambridge, 1991).
134. Fleming, Robin. "Rural Elites and Urban Communities in Late-Saxon England." *Past and Present* 141 (1993). 3-37.
135. Fleming, Robin. *Domesday Book and the Law: Society and Legal Custom in Early Medieval England*. (Cambridge, 1998).
136. Fleming Robin. "The New Wealth, the New Rich and the New Political Style in Late Anglo-Saxon England." *Anglo-Norman Studies* 23. (2001). 1-22.
137. Foot, Sarah. *Veiled Women*. (2 Vols., Aldershot, 2000).
138. Godden, M.R. "Ælfric and Anglo-Saxon Kingship." *English Historical Review* 102 (1987). 911-15.
139. Godden, M.R. "Money, Power and Morality in Late Anglo-Saxon England." *Anglo-Saxon England* 19 (1990). 41-66.
140. Greenfield, Stanley B., & Robinson, F.C. *A Bibliography of Publications on Old English Literature to the end of 1972*. (Manchester, 1980).
141. Harrison, R. "A Note on the Battle of Brunanburh." *Durham Archaeological Journal* I (1984). 63-65.

142. Hart, C.R. "Eadnoth, First Abbot of Ramsey, and the Foundation of Chatteris and St Ives." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society*. 56-7 (1964). 61-67.
143. Hart, C.R. "The Ramsay Computus." *English Historical Review* 85 (1970). 29-44.
144. Hart, C.R. "Danelaw Charters and the Glastonbury Scriptorium." *Downside Review* 90 (1972). 125-32.
145. Hart, C.R. "Athelstan 'Half King' and his family." *Anglo-Saxon England* 2 (1974). 115-44.
146. Hart, C.R. "Two Queens of England." *Ampleforth Journal* 82 (1977). 10-15.
147. Hart, C.R. "The Ealdordom of Essex." *An Essex Tribute: essays presented to Frederick G. Emmison as a tribute to his life and work for Essex history and archives*. (London, 1987). 57-84.
148. Hart, C.R. *The Danelaw*. (London, 1992).
149. Haskins, George. "Charter Witness Lists in the Reign of King John." *Speculum*. Vol. 13. (1938). 319-325.
150. Hayashi, Hiroshi. *A Study of the Charter-Criticism of the Anglo-Saxon Period, Its Theory and Practice: a Preliminary Handbook*. 2nd ed. (Tokyo, by the author, 1998). ["being a separate volume of *Essays in Anglo-Saxon Law and History* (2 Vols., 1989-1995)"].
151. Hill, Paul. *The Age of Athelstan: Britain's Forgotten History*. (Stroud, 2004).
152. Hodges, Richard. *The Anglo-Saxon Achievement: Archeology & the beginnings of English Society*. (London, 1989).
153. Hollister, C. Warren. *Anglo-Saxon Military Institutions on the Eve of the Norman Conquest*. (Oxford, 1962).
154. Hooper, Nicholas. "The Housecarls in England in the Eleventh Century." *Anglo-Norman Studies* 7 (1985). 161-177.
155. Horner, Shari. "Spiritual Truth and Sexual Violence: The Old English 'Juliana', Anglo-Saxon Nuns, and the Discourse of Female Monastic Enclosure." *Signs* 19, No. 3 (Spring, 1994). 658-75.
156. Hurt, James. *Ælfric*. (New York, 1972).
157. Hyams, Paul R. "Feud in Medieval England." *Haskins Society Journal* 3 (1991). 1-21.

158. Hyams, Paul. "Feud and the State in Late Anglo-Saxon England." *Journal of British Studies* 40 (2001). 1-43.
159. Insley, Charles. "Charters and Scriptoria in the Anglo-Saxon South-West." *Early Medieval Europe* 7 (1998). 173-97.
160. Insley, Charles. "Assemblies and Charters in Late Anglo-Saxon England." *Political Assemblies in the Earlier Middle Ages*. Barnwell, P.S. and Marco Mostert (eds.). (Turnhout, Belgium, 2003). 47-59.
161. Jayakumar, Shashi. *The Politics of the English Kingdom c.955-c.978*. D.Phil. (Oxford, 2001).
162. Jayakumar, Shashi. "Some Reflections on the 'Foreign Policies' of Edgar 'the Peaceable'." *Haskins Society Journal* 10 (2001). 17-37.
163. John, Eric. *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies*. (Bristol, 1966).
164. John, Eric. *Reassessing Anglo-Saxon England*. (Manchester, 1996).
165. Jonsson, Kenneth. *The New Era: The Reformation of the Late Anglo-Saxon Coinage*. Commentationes de Nummis Saeculorum IX-XI in Suecia Repertis. Nova Series I. (London, 1987).
166. Karkov, Catherine E. *The Ruler Portraits of Anglo-Saxon England*. (Woodbridge, 2004).
167. Keays-Young, Julia. "The Eadmund-Ælfric Charter, 944 A.D." *The Review of English Studies* 6, No. 23 (July, 1930). 271-83.
168. Ker, N.R. *Catalogue of Manuscripts Containing Anglo-Saxon*. (Oxford, 1957).
169. Keynes, Simon. *The Diplomas of King Æthelred 'The Unready': A Study of Their Use As Historical Evidence*. (Cambridge, 1980).
170. Keynes, Simon. "King Athelstan's Books." *Learning and Literature in Anglo-Saxon England: Studies presented to Peter Clemoes on the occasion of his sixty-fifth birthday*. Michael Lapidge and Helmut Gneuss (eds.). (Cambridge, 1985). 143-201.
171. Keynes, Simon. "Crime and Punishment in the Reign of King Æthelred the Unready." *People and Places in Northern Europe 500-1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*. Ian Wood and Niels Lund (ed.). (Woodbridge, 1991). 67-81.
172. Keynes, Simon. "The West-Saxon Charters of King Æthelwulf and His Sons." *English Historical Review* 109 (1994). 1109-49.

173. Keynes, Simon. "Cnut's Earls." *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway*. Alexander R. Rumble (ed.). (London, 1994). 43-88.
174. Keynes, Simon. "The 'Dunstan B' charters." *Anglo-Saxon England* 23 (1994). 165-93.
175. Keynes, Simon. "Anglo-Saxon Entries in the 'Liber Vitae' of Brescia." *Alfred The Wise; Studies in Honour of Janet Bately on the occasion of her sixty-fifth birthday*. Jane Roberts, Janet L. Nelson, and Malcolm Godden (eds.). (Cambridge, 1997). 99-119.
176. Keynes, Simon. "King Alfred and the Mercians." *Kings, Currency, and Alliances: History and Coinage of Southern England in the Ninth Century*. Mark A.S. Blackburn and David N. Dumville (eds.). (Woodbridge, 1998). 1-46.
177. Keynes, Simon. "England, c.900-1016". *The New Cambridge Medieval History III*. Tim Reuter (ed.). (Cambridge, 1999). 456-86.
178. Klinck, Anne L. "Anglo-Saxon women and the law." *Journal of Medieval History* 8 (1982). 107-21.
179. Knowles, D. (et al, eds.). *The Heads of Religious Houses: England and Wales 940-1216*. (Cambridge, 1972).
180. Lapidge, Michael. "Some Latin Poems as Evidence for the Reign of Athelstan." *Anglo-Saxon England* 9 (1981). 61-98.
181. Lapidge, Michael. "Schools, Learning and Literature in Tenth-Century England." *Settimane di studio del Centro italiano di Studi sull'alto medioevo*, 38 (1991). 951-98.
182. Lapidge, Michael. *Anglo-Latin Literature, 900-1066*. (London, 1993).
183. Lapidge, Michael, John Blair, Simon Keynes, and Donald Scragg (eds.). *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England*. (Oxford, 1999).
184. Larson, L.M. *The King's Household Before the Norman Conquest*. (Madison, 1904).
185. Lawson, M.K. "The Collection of Danegeld and Heregeld in the reigns of Æthelred II and Cnut." *English Historical Review* 99 (1984). 721-38.
186. Lawson, M.K. *Cnut, The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century*. (London, 1993).
187. Lehtola, Lori A. *King Aethelstan: 'Rightwys Kyng Borne of All Englund'*. PhD. (University of Houston, 2004).

188. Leyser, Henrietta. *Medieval Women: A Social History of Women in England, 450-1500*. (London, 1996).
189. Locherbie-Cameron, M. "Byrhtnoth and his Family." *The Battle of Maldon AD 991*. D. Scragg (ed.). (Oxford, 1991). 253-62.
190. Loyn, H.R. "The Imperial Style of the Tenth Century Anglo-Saxon Kings." *History* 40 (1955). 111-15.
191. Loyn, H.R. "The Term Ealdorman in the Translations Prepared at the time of King Alfred." *English Historical Review* 68 (1955). 512-25.
192. Loyn, H.R. "Gesiths and Thegns in Anglo-Saxon England from the Seventh to the Tenth Century." *English Historical Review* 70 (1955). 528-49.
193. Loyn, H.R. "Boroughs and Mints, A.D. 900-1066." *Anglo-Saxon Coins: Studies Presented to F.M. Stenton on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday*, R.H.M. Dolley (ed.). (London, 1961). 122-35.
194. Loyn, H.R. "Kinship in Anglo-Saxon England." *Anglo-Saxon England* 3 (1973). 197-210.
195. Loyn, H.R. "Wales and England in the Tenth Century: the Context of the Athelstan Charters." *Welsh History Review* 10 (1980-1). 283-301.
196. Loyn, H.R. *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500-1087*. (London, 1984).
197. Lutz, A. "Das Studium der Angelsächsischen Chronik im 16. Jahrhundert: Nowell und Joscelyn". *Anglia* 100 (1982). 301-56.
198. Magennis, Hugh. *Images of Community in Old English Poetry*. Cambridge Studies in Anglo-Saxon England 18. (Cambridge, 1996).
199. Mawer, Allen. "The Redemption of the Five Boroughs." *English Historical Review* 38 (1926). 551-7.
200. McGovern, John F. "The Meaning of "gesette land" in Anglo-Saxon Land Tenure." *Speculum* 46, No. 4 (October, 1971). 589-96.
201. McGovern, John F. "The Hide and Related Land-Tenure Concepts in Anglo-Saxon England, A.D. 700-1100." *Traditio* 28 (1972). 101-18.
202. McKitterick, Rosamond. *The Frankish Kingdom Under the Carolingians, 751-987*. (London, 1983).
203. Meddings, John. 'Friendship Among the Aristocracy in Anglo-Norman England.' *Anglo-Norman Studies* 22. (2000). 187-204.

204. Meyer, Marc Anthony. "Women and the Tenth Century English Monastic Reform." *Revue Bénédictine* 87 (1977). 34-61.
205. Meyer, Marc Anthony. "Land Charters and the Legal Position of Anglo-Saxon Women." *The Women of England From Anglo-Saxon Times to the Present: Interpretive Bibliographical Essays*. Barbara Kanner (ed.). (London, 1980). 57-82.
206. Meyer, Marc Anthony. "Patronage of the West Saxon Royal Nunneries in Late Anglo-Saxon England." *Revue Bénédictine* 91 (1981). 332-58.
207. Meyer, Marc Anthony. "The queen's 'demesne' in later Anglo-Saxon England." *The Culture of Christendom: Essays in Medieval History in Commemoration of Denis L.T. Bethell*. M.A. Meyer (ed.). (London, 1993). 75-113.
208. Meyer, Marc Anthony. "Queens, convents and conversion in early Anglo-Saxon England." *Revue Bénédictine* 109 (1999). 90-116.
209. Nelson, Janet L. "'A King across the sea': Alfred in Continental perspective." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 36 (1986). 45-68.
210. Nelson, Janet L. "Reconstructing a Royal Family: Reflections on Alfred, From Asser, chapter 2." *People and Places in Northern Europe 500-1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*. Ian Wood and Niels Lund (eds.). (Woodbridge, 1991). 47-66.
211. North, J.J. *English Hammered Coinage, Vol. I*. 2nd ed. (London, 1980).
212. Ó Cróinín, Dáibhi. *Early Medieval Ireland, 400-1200*. Longman History of Ireland, Vol. I. Steven G. Ellis (ed.). (New York, 1995).
213. O'Donovan, M.A. "An Interim Revision of Episcopal Dates for the Province of Canterbury." *Anglo-Saxon England* 1 (1972). 23-44.
214. Oman, Charles. *England Before the Norman Conquest, Being a History of the Celtic, Roman and Anglo-Saxon Periods Down to the Year A.D. 1066*. (London, 1910).
215. Parkes, M.B. "The Palaeography of the Parker Manuscript of the *Chronicle*, Laws and Sedulius, and Historiography at Winchester in the Late Ninth and Tenth Centuries." *Anglo-Saxon England* 5 (1976). 149-71.
216. Pelteret, David A.E. *Slavery in Early Mediaeval England from the Reign of Alfred Until the Twelfth Century*. Studies in Anglo-Saxon History VII. David Dumville (ed.). (Woodbridge, 1995).

217. Pollack, Frederick. "Anglo-Saxon Laws." *English Historical Review* 8 (1893). 239-71.
218. Pollock, Sir Frederick and F. Maitland. *The History of English Law Before the Time of Edward I.* (2 Vols., Cambridge, 1895).
219. Reuter, Timothy. "The Making of England and Germany, 850-1050: Points of Comparison and Difference." *Medieval Europeans: Studies in Ethnic Identity and National Perspectives in Medieval Europe.* A. Smyth (ed.). (London, 1988). 53-70.
220. Richardson, H.G. and G.O. Sayles. *Law and Legislation in England: From Æthelberht to Magna Carta.* (Edinburgh, 1966).
221. Roberts, Jane. "The Old English Vocabulary of Nobility." *Nobles and Nobility in Medieval Europe: Concepts, Origins, Transformations.* Anne J. Duggan (ed.). (Woodbridge, 2000). 69-84.
222. Robinson, J.A. "The Saxon Bishops of Wells: A Historical Study in the Tenth Century." *British Academy Supplemental Papers* 4 (London, 1918). 12-14.
223. Rollason, David. *Northumbria, 500-1100, Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom.* (Cambridge, 2003).
224. Ross, Margaret C. "Concubinage in Anglo-Saxon England." *Past and Present* 108 (1985). 3-34.
225. Runciman, W.G. "Accelerating Social Mobility: The Case of Anglo-Saxon England." *Past and Present* 104 (August, 1984). 3-30.
226. Sawyer, P. "The Last Scandinavian Kings of York." *Northern History* 31 (1995). 39-44.
227. Schoebe, G. "The Chapters of Archbishop Oda (942/6) and the Canons of the Legatine Councils of 786." *Bulletin of the Institute of Historical Research* 35 (1962). 75-83.
228. Schulenburg, Jane Tibbetts. "Women's Monastic Communities, 500-1100: Patterns of Expansion and Decline." *Signs* 14, No. 2 (Winter, 1989). 261-292.
229. Sharp, Shelia. "The West Saxon tradition of dynastic marriage: with special reference to Edward the Elder". *Edward the Elder 899-924.* N.J. Higham and D.H. Hill (eds.). (London, 2001). 79-88.
230. Simpson, L. "The King Alfred / St. Cuthbert Episode in the *Historia de sancto Cuthberto*: Its Significance for mid-tenth-century English History." *St. Cuthbert, His Cult, and His Community to A.D. 1200.* Bonner et al. (eds.). (Woodbridge, 1989). 397-411.

231. Smyth, Alfred. *Scandinavian York and Dublin: the history and archaeology of two related Viking Kingdoms*. (2 Vols., Dublin, 1975/9).
232. Smyth, Alfred. *Warlords and Holy Men, Scotland A.D. 80-1000*. (London, 1984).
233. Stafford, Pauline. "The King's Wife in Wessex 800-1066." *Past and Present* 91 (1981). 3-27.
234. Stafford, Pauline. "Charles the Bald, Judith, and England." *Charles the Bald: Court and Kingdom*. Margaret T. Gibson and Janet L. Nelson (eds.). BAR International Series 101 (Oxford, 1981). 139-53.
235. Stafford, Pauline. *Queens, Concubines, and Dowagers: The King's Wife in the Early Middle Ages*. (Athens, 1983).
236. Stafford, Pauline. *Unification and Conquest: A Political and Social History of England in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries*. (London, 1989).
237. Stafford, Pauline. *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England*. (Oxford, 1997).
238. Stafford, Pauline. "Queens, Nunneries, and Reforming Churchmen: Gender, Religious Status and Reform in Tenth- and Eleventh- Century England." *Past and Present* 163 (1999). 3-35.
239. Stanley, E.G. "On the Laws of King Alfred: The End of the Preface and the Beginning of the Laws." *Alfred The Wise; Studies in Honor of Janet Bately on the occasion of her sixty-fifth birthday*. Roberts, Jane, Janet L. Nelson, and Malcolm Godden (eds.). (Cambridge, 1997). 211-21.
240. Stenton, Sir Frank. *Early History of the Abbey of Abingdon*. (Reading, 1913).
241. Stenton, Sir Frank. *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period*. (Oxford, 1955).
242. Stenton, Sir Frank. *Anglo-Saxon England*. 3rd Edition. (London, 1971).
243. Stevenson, Carl. "The Anglo-Saxon Borough." *English Historical Review* 45, No. 178 (April, 1930). 177-207.
244. Stevenson, Robert B.K. *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles: National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland*. Part I. (London, 1966).
245. Swarzenski, Hanns. "The Anhalt Morgan Gospels". *The Art Bulletin* 31, No. 2 (June, 1949). 77-83.

246. Thacker, Alan. "Some Terms for Noblemen in Anglo-Saxon England." *Anglo-Saxon Studies in Archaeology and History* 2 (1981). 201-36.
247. Thacker, Alan. "Saint-making and Relic Collecting by Oswald and His Communities." *St Oswald of Worcester: Life and Influence*. N.P. Brooks and C.R.E. Cubitt (eds.). (Leicester, 1996). 244-68.
248. Thacker, Alan. "*Loca Sanctorum*: The Significance of Place in the Study of the Saints. *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds.). (Oxford, 2002). 1-43.
249. Thacker, Alan. "The Making of a Local Saint. *Local Saints and Local Churches in the Early Medieval West*. Alan Thacker and Richard Sharpe (eds.). (Oxford, 2002). 45-73.
250. Thompson, Rodney. *William of Malmesbury*. (Bury St. Edmund's, 1987).
251. Thompson, Susan D. *Anglo-Saxon Royal Diplomas: A Palaeography*. (Woodbridge, 2006).
252. Trousdale, Alaric. "*Principem te constituerunt*": *Thegnly Promotion and Royal Administrative Practice in Tenth-Century England*. Unpublished MSc Thesis. (Edinburgh, 2002).
253. Van Houts, Elisabeth. *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900-1200*. (London, 1999).
254. Walker, Ian W. *Mercia and the Making of England*. (Stroud, 2000).
255. Walker, Simon. "A Context for 'Brunanburh'?" *Warriors and Churchmen in the High Middle Ages*. Timothy Reuter (ed.). (London, 1992). 21-39.
256. Wareham, Andrew. *Lords and Communities in Early Medieval East Anglia*. (Woodbridge, 2005).
257. Whitbread, L. "Æthelweard and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle." *English Historical Review* 74 (1959). 577-589.
258. Whitelock, Dorothy. "The Dealings of the Kings of England with Northumbria in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries." *The Anglo-Saxons: Studies in Some Aspects of Their History and Culture Presented to Bruce Dickens*. Peter Clemoes (ed.). (London, 1959). 70-88.
259. Whitelock, Dorothy. "The Authorship of the Account of King Edgar's Establishment of Monasteries." *Philological Essays: Studies in Old and Middle English Language and Literature*. James L. Rosier (ed.). (The Hague, 1970). 125-36.

260. Whitelock, Dorothy. "The Appointment of Dunstan as Archbishop of Canterbury." *Otium et Negotium: Studies in Onomatology and Library Science Presented to Olof von Feilitzen*. Folke Sandgren (ed.). (Stockholm, 1973). 232-47.
261. Williams, Ann. "Princeps merciorum gentis: the family, career, and connections of Ælfhere, ealdorman of Mercia, 956-83." *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982). 143-72.
262. Williams, Ann. "Some Notes and Considerations on Problems Connected with the English Succession, 860-1066." *Proceedings of the Battle Conference on Anglo-Norman Studies I* (Ipswich, 1978). 144-167.
263. Williams, Ann. "A West-Country Magnate of the Eleventh Century: the Family, Estates and Patronage of Beorhtric Son of Ælfgar." *Family Trees and the Roots of Politics: The Prosopography of Britain and France from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century*. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (ed.). (Woodbridge, 1997). 41-68.
264. Williams, Ann. *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England, c. 500-1066*. (New York, 1999).
265. Wood, Michael. "The Making of King Aethelstan's Empire: an English Charlemagne?" *Ideal and Reality in Frankish and Anglo-Saxon Society*. Patrick Wormald, with Donald Bullough and Roger Collins (eds.). (Oxford, 1983). 250-72.
266. Woolf, Alex. "Erik Bloodaxe Revisited." *Northern History* 34 (1998). 189-93.
267. Woolf, Henry Bosley. "The Naming of Women in Old English Times." *Modern Philology* 36, No. 2 (November, 1938). 113-20.
268. Wormald, Patrick. "The Uses of Literacy in Anglo-Saxon England and its Neighbours." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 27 (1977). 95-114.
269. Wormald, Patrick. "In Search of Offa's 'Law Code.'" *People and Places in Northern Europe 500-1600: Essays in Honour of Peter Hayes Sawyer*. Ian Wood and Niels Lund (eds.). (Woodbridge, 1991). 25-45.
270. Wormald, Patrick. "The Lambarde Problem: Eighty Years On." *Alfred The Wise; Studies in Honor of Janet Batley on the occasion of her sixty-fifth birthday*. Roberts, Jane, Janet L. Nelson, and Malcolm Godden (eds.). (Cambridge, 1997). 237-35.
271. Wormald, Patrick. *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West: Law as Text, Image and Experience*. (London, 1999).

272. Wormald, Patrick. *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the twelfth century*. Vol. I. (Oxford, 1999).
273. Wright, C.E. *The Cultivation of Saga in Anglo-Saxon England*. (Edinburgh, 1939).
274. Yorke, Barbara. "Æthelwold and the Politics of the Tenth Century." *Bishop Æthelwold, His Career and Influence*. Barbara Yorke (ed.). (Woodbridge, 1988). 65-88.
275. Yorke, Barbara. *Nunneries and the Anglo-Saxon Royal Houses*. (London, 2003).

Appendix I

King Edmund's Royal Charter Styles:

- S 459(940): *Admundus nutu Dei gracia basileos Anglorum*
- S 460(940): *Edmund...superno numine basileos industrius Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu*
- S 461(940): *Eadmundus, fauente superno numine basileos industrius Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu*
- S 462(940): *Edmundus fauente superno numine basileos industrius Anglorum ceterarumque gencium in circuitu*
- S 463(940): *Eadmundus . favente superno numine basileos industrius Anglorum cæterarumque gentium in circuitu*
- S 464(940): *Eadmundus . rex Anglorum cælestis patrie exardens*
- S 465(940): *Eadmundus . industrius Anglorum rex cæterarumque gentium in circuitu*
- S 466(940): *Edmundus divina michi arridente gracia rex Anglorum et curagulus multarum gencium*
- S 467(940): *Edmundus annunente omnipotentis Dei clementia rex Anglorum et eque multarum gentium in circuitu*
- S 468(940): *Eadmundus divina michi adridente gratia rex Anglorum*
- S 469(940): *Eadmundus . divina favente gratia Rex Anglorum*
- S 470(940): *Eadmundus . diuina fauente gratia basyleos Anglorum ceterarumque prouinciarum in circuitu*
- S 471(940): *Eadmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu*
- S 472(940): *Edmundum Regem Anglo Saxonum regali prosapia procreatum*
- S 473 (940): *Edmundi Regis Anglo Saxona*
- S 474 (941): *Edmundus industrius Anglorum rex ceterarumque gencium in circuitu*
- S 475 (941): *Eadmundus . industrius Anglorum rex cæterarumque gentium in circuitu*
- S 476 (941): *Eadmundus divina mihi arridente gratia . rex Anglorum*
- S 477 (941): *Eadmundus rex 7 Eadredus frater ejus . necnon et Eduuiuus . filius ejusdem Eadmundi regis*

- S 478 (941): *Admundus, ex regali progenie Deo annuente regenteque super Angligenas aliasque multas gentes in circuitu habitantes rex ordinates*
- S 479 (942): *Eadmund beato dei patrocinio rex et rector Angulsæxna inter innumeras*
- S 480 (942): *admundus, desiderio regni celestis exardens, fauente superno numine basileos industrius Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium*
- S 481 (942): *Edmundus industrius Anglorum rex ceterarumque gencium in circuitu persistencium*
- S 482 (942): *Eadmundus, rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium*
- S 483 (942): *Eadmundus , rex Anglorum genciumque circumsistencium præpotens almifice rector*
- S 484 (942): *Edmund rex*
- S 485 (942): *Admundus, desiderio regni celestis exardens, fauente superno numine basyleos industrius Anglorum rex ceterarumque gencium in circuitu persistencium*
- S 486 (943): *Eadmundus . rex Anglorum cæterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium*
- S 487 (943): *Eadmundus . rex Angligenarum cæterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium*
- S 488 (943): *Eadmundus . industrius Anglorum rex cæterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium*
- S 489 (943): *Eadmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gencium in circuitu persistencium*
- S 490 (943): *Admundus omnireantis disponente clemencia Angligenarum omniumque gencium undique secus habitancium rex*
- S 491 (943): *Eadmundus Angligenarum rex ceterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium*
- S 492 (943): No royal style.
- S 493 (944): *Eadmundus . rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium gubernator et rector*
- S 494 (944): *Eadmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium gubernator et rector*

- S 495 (944): *Eadmundus . gentis Anglorum rex*
- S 496 (944) (? For 942): *Eadmundus Angligenarum rex*
- S 497 (944): *Eadmundus . rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu
persistentium gubernator et rector .*
- S 498 (944): *Edmundus rex Anglorum huiusque provincie Britonum ruris gubernator*
- S 499 (944): *Edmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gencium in circuitu
persistencium Gubernator 7 rector*
- S 500 (944): *Eadmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu
persistentium gubernator et rector*
- S 501 (944): *Eadmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu
persistentium gubernator et rector*
- S 502 (944): *Admundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gencium in circuitu
persistencium*
- S 503 (944): *Eadmundus . Anglorum rex*
- S 504 (944): *Edmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gencium in circuitu
persistencium gubernator et rector*
- S 505 (945): *Edmund diuina Dei fulciete gratiuncula rex totiusque Albionis
primicerius*
- S 506 (945): *Edmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium
gubernator et rector*
- S 507 (945): *Ædmundus , rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu
persistentium gubernator et rector*
- S 508 (946): *Eadmundus desiderio regni cælestis exardens favente superno numine
basyleos Anglorum multarumque gentium in circuitu persistentium*
- S 509 (946): *Edmund divina gracia favente rex et primicerius tocius Albionis*
- S 510 (946): *Eadmundus . rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu
persistentium gubernator et rector*
- S 511 (?941): *Eadmundus qui ejusdem munere gratuito previdente compos regni
Anglorum basileus existo . per omnipotentis dexteram paterno solio
sublimatus*

S 512 (943): *Eadmundus . Anglorum rex ceterarumque gentium in circuitu
persistentium*

S 513 (944x946): *Edmundus rex Anglorum ceterarumque gentium in circuitu
persistencium gubernator et rector*

S 514 (942x946): *Eadmundus rex Anglorum necnon et Merciorum*

Appendix II: King Athelstan's Diplomas 935 x 939

	Sawyer Archive BA ASC Year Type	430 OMW 935	429 Shaft 935	431 Glast 936	438 Wilt 937	432 Ath 937	437 Thor 937	411 Ab 29 7937	441 OMW 938	442 Glast 938	440 OMW 938 sp?	448 Ab 30 939	449 OMW 939	447 CCC 107 939 Ath. 'C'	446 OMW 939	445 Shaft 10 939	455 Much 7939 sp?	Sawyer Archive BA ASC Year Type
Royals																		Royals
Athelstan		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Athelstan
Edmund														1 fra. r.				Edmund
Eadred														2 fra. r.				Eadred
Eadburga														ben				Eadburga
Ecclesiastics																		Ecclesiastics
Wulhelm (Cant.)		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Wulhelm (Cant.)
Ælfheah (Win.)		3*	2*	2*	2*	2	2*	2*	2*	3*	2*	2*	2*	2*	2*	2*	2	Ælfheah (Win.)
Theodred (Lon.)		2*			3*	3	3*	3*	3*	3*	2*	3*	3*	3*	3*			Theodred (Lon.)
Cenwald (Wor.)		4			4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4			Cenwald (Wor.)
Wulfhun (Sel.)					5	5	5	5	5	6	5	5	5	5	5			Wulfhun (Sel.)
Oda (Rams.)		5			5	6	6	6	6	6	5	6	6	6	6			Oda (Rams.)
Wulhelm (Wel.)							7	7	7	7	7	7	7	[7]				Wulhelm (Wel.)
Burgic (Roch.)					7		7	8	8	8	8	8	8	8	8			Burgic (Roch.)
Æthelgar (Cred.)					8	8	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9			3	Æthelgar (Cred.)
Ælfred (Sher.)		6													ben			Ælfred (Sher.)
Ælfwine (Ælle) (Lich.)		7																Ælfwine (Ælle) (Lich.)
Ælfheah (Wel.)		8			6	7	8											Ælfheah (Wel.)
Conan (Corn.)																	4	Conan (Corn.)
Ealdormen																		Ealdormen
Ælfwald					1	1	1	1	1	1	[<Disappears							Ælfwald
Uhtred					2	2	2	2	2	2	4	4	4	4	5			Uhtred
Ælfhere											Minister->	1	1	1	1			Ælfhere
Wulfgar											Minister->	2	2	2	2			Wulfgar
Æthelstan 'Half King'											ben	3	3	3	3			Æthelstan
Wulfstan																	4	Wulfstan
Thegns																		Thegns
Odda		1			1	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		2	Odda
Ælfric		22			4	7	18	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2		3	Ælfric
Eadmund		23			5	13	5	4	5	3	3	3	3	3				Eadmund
Wulfgar 1		10			2	12	6	2	2	[<Ealdorman]								Wulfgar 1
Wulfsige		17			6	2	8		5	4	4	4	4	4				Wulfsige
Ælfhere		25			7		11	6	6	[<Ealdorman]								Ælfhere
Wiltgar		19			8		14	7	7	6	5	5	5	5				Wiltgar
Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)		26			9		17	8	8	7	6	6	7				1	Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)
Ælfheah (Son of Ealhhelm?)		4			19		21 ben		ben									Ælfheah (Son of Ealhhelm?)
Ælfred		3			11		25	9	11	8	7	7	8					Ælfred
Wulfmær		11			12		2	10	10		8	8	10	[<Disappears				Wulfmær
Wulfgar 2		9			13		11		12	10	9	9	6					Wulfgar 2
Ælfsige 1		15			14		9	12	13	11	10	10	12					Ælfsige 1
Ordheah		27			16		15	14	14	12	11	11	13					Ordheah
Sigewulf		[5]			18		ben	26	15	15	12	12	14	[<Disappears				Sigewulf
Eadric (Brother of H.K.)		29			22		10	17	17	13	13	13	15					Eadric (Brother of H.K.)
Ealhhelm					23		13	18		14	14	14	16					Ealhhelm
Ælfsige 2		16			24		16	19		15	15	15	17					Ælfsige 2
Æthe(l)red		31			25		19	20 ben	9	16	16	16	9					Æthe(l)red
Æthelmund		13			26		23	21		17	17	17	20					Æthelmund
Wulhelm		6			27		27	22		18	18	18	21					Wulhelm
Wullaf		32			28		4	23		5	19	19	22					Wullaf
Sigered		21			3		20						19					Sigered
Æthelstan		2			20		3	16		16								Æthelstan

Appendix II: King Edmund's Diplomas 940 x 941

	Sawyer Archive BA ASC Date Type	461 Ab	463 OMW	464 CCC	465 OMW	470 NMW	467 OMW	469 Wilt	468 Wilt	475 OMW	477 CCC	511 OMW	414 Bath	415 Malm	476 Bath	Sawyer Archive BA ASC Date Type	
		Em 'A'	Em 'A'	Ath 'C'	Em 'B'					Em 'B'	sp	[941] sp?	[941] sp	[941] sp	Ath 'C'		
Royals																Royals	
Edmund		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Edmund	
Eadgifu						1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.		2 mat. r.	3 regina					Eadgifu	
Eadred		fra. r.	fra. r.	fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.	fra. r.	fra. r.	1 fra. r.	1 fra. r.	cl. fra. r.			fra. r.	Eadred	
Ecclesiastics																Ecclesiastics	
Wulhelm (Cant.)		1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1	<1>	1	1		Wulhelm (Cant.)	
Theodred (Lon.)		2*	2*	2*	2*	2*	2*			2*	2*	5	2*	2*		Theodred (Lon.)	
Æltheah (Win.)		3*	3*	3*	3*	3*	3*	1*	1*	3*	3*	8	3*	3*	1*	Æltheah (Win.)	
Kenwald (Wor.)		4	4	4	4	4	4	3		4		2	4	4	2	Kenwald (Wor.)	
Oda (Rams.)		6	5	5	5	5	5	2	2	6	[4]	3	5	5	3	Oda (Rams.)	
Ælfric (Here.)		5	8	6	6	6	6			4	5	5	9	6	6	4	Ælfric (Here.)
Wulhelm (Wells)		7	7	8	7	7	7			5	8		7	7	7	6	Wulhelm (Wells)
Burgric (Roch.)		8	9	9	8	8	8			6		7	7	8	8		Burgric (Roch.)
Æthelgar (Cred.)		9	10	10	9	9	9			7		8	9	9	9	5	Æthelgar (Cred.)
Ælfrid (Sel.)												6?	4?				Ælfrid (Sel.)
Ealdormen																Ealdormen	
Ælthre		1	[1]	1		1	1	<Disappears					2	1	2		Ælthre
Wulfgar		2	[2]	2	1	2	2	1		1			4	2	1	1	Wulfgar
Æthelstan 'Half King'		3	[3]	3	3	4	4	2		3			3	[3]	4	3	Æthelstan 'Half King'
Uhtred		4	[4]	4	6	7	7	[5]		7			7	7	7		Uhtred
Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)				Minister->	2	3	3			2			6		3	2	Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)
Ealhelm				Minister->	4	5	5			4			[5]	5	5	4	Ealhelm
Æthelmund				Minister->	5	6	6	[4]		5			1	6	6		Æthelmund
Æthelstan 2										3				4			Æthelstan 2
Thegns																Thegns	
Odda		1	1	1	1	1	1	1		1			4	4	1 or 5	1	Odda
Ælfric		2	2	2	2	2	2	2		2			14	8	2 or 6	2	Ælfric
Eadmund		3	4	3	3	3	3	3		3			8	1	1 or 5	4	Eadmund
Wulfsige		4	5	4		4							5	5	3 or 7		Wulfsige
Wulfa		5	6	5	4	5		4		4			6	9	4 or 8	3	Wulfa
Wihthgar		6	7	6	5	6		5					2	13	9	5	Wihthgar
Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)		7	8	7	<Ealdorman												Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)
Ælfrid 1		8	9	8	6	7		6		14			7	2	10	6	Ælfrid 1
Wulfric 1 (?Cufing)		9			7	8		7		15				6	11	7	Wulfric 1 (?Cufing)
Wulfgar		10	10	9	8	9		8		5			3	14	2 or 6	8	Wulfgar
Ælfsige 1		11 ben	11	10	9	10		9		11			1	10	12	9	Ælfsige 1
Ordheah		12	12	11	10	11				13				3	3 or 7	10	Ordheah
Eadric (Brother of H.K.)		13	13	12	11	12	ben			6			12	7	4 or 8	11	Eadric (Brother of H.K.)
Ealhelm		14	14	13	<Ealdorman												Ealhelm
Ælfsige 2		15	15	14	12	13								11	13	12	Ælfsige 2
Æthe(l)red		16	16	15	13	14		10		10				15	14	13	Æthe(l)red
Æthelmund		17	17	16	<Ealdorman												Æthelmund
Wulhelm		18	18	17	14	15		11						16	15	14	Wulhelm

Appendix IV: King Edmund's Diplomas 942 x 943

	Sawyer Archive BA ASC Date Type	478 Shaft 12 941	496 Ab 36 [942]	483 BSIE 942	481 Glast 942	480 Ab 34 942	485 Shaft 13 942	482 Ab 35 942	479 Bur 5 942	484 Bur 6 942	492 Wilt 33 943	471 Ab 33 943	487 OMW 37 943	491 Ab 112 943	512 CCC 943	488 OMW 113 943	489 CCC 943	486 OMW 943	1811 Wilt [943]	490 Shaft 14 943	Sawyer Archive BA ASC Date Type	
				Em. 'b'	Ath. 'b'			Allit	Allit					Ath. 'c'	Em 'b'						Ath. 'c'	Type
Royals																						
Edmund		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Edmund
Eadgifu			1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.						1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.	1 mat. r.	ben				Eadgifu
Eadred		fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.						2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.	2 fra. r.					Eadred
Ecclesiastics																						
Oda (Cant.)		1					2	1		1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1				Oda (Cant.)
Wulfstan (York)					1	1	1		1	2												Wulfstan (York)
Theodred (Lon.)		2*	1*	1* ben		2*	3*	2*			2*	2*	2*	2*	2*	1*	2*	2*			2*	Theodred (Lon.)
Æltheah (Win.)		3*	2*	2*	2*	3*	4*	3*			3*	3*	3*	3*	3*	3*	3*	3*	1*			Æltheah (Win.)
Cenwald (Wor.)		4	3	3		5	4	3			4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4				Cenwald (Wor.)
Ælfric (Here.)		5	4	4		4	6	5			5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	2			Ælfric (Here.)
Ælfred (Sel.)			5?	5?		5?	7?	7?			6?	6?	6?	6?	6?	5?	6?	6?				Ælfred (Sel.)
Alfred (Sherb.)			5?	5?		5?	7?	7?			6?	6?	6?	6?	6?	5?	6?	6?				Alfred (Sherb.)
Burgric (Roch.)		7	6	6		6	8			7	7				7	6	7				Burgric (Roch.)	
Wulfsize (Sherb.)																8	8	4				Wulfsize (Sherb.)
Æthelgar (Cred.)		[8]	7	7		7	9			8	8	7	7	8	7	9	6	3				Æthelgar (Cred.)
Wulhelm (Wells)		6	8				10		4	9	9	8	8	9	9	10	7	5				Wulhelm (Wells)
Ælfric (Rams.)			ben	[cf. Hereford]																		Ælfric (Rams.)
Wulfgar (Lich.)								2														Wulfgar (Lich.)
Others																						
Cynesige								5														Cynesige
Ealdormen																						
Wulfgar		1	1	1		1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	[> Disappears						Wulfgar
Æthelstan 'Half King'		3	2	2	ben	2 ben	2			2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1			Æthelstan 'Half-King'
Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)		2	3	3		3	3	1		4	4	3	3	2	4	4	2	2	2			Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)
Æthelstan 2			4			4	4			3	4				3							Æthelstan 2
Ealhhelm		4	5	4		5	5	2		5	3	5	4	3	5	4	3					Ealhhelm
Æthelmund		5	7	5		6	7		1 (+5)	6	4	7	6	4	6	5	4	3				Æthelmund
Eadric (Brother of H.K.)				?Minister->		7	6			6	5				3						ben	Eadric (Brother of H.K.)
Uhtred		6	6			8	8			7	5	8	7	5	7	6						Uhtred
Thegns																						
Odda		1	1	1		1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	[1] [> Disappears					Odda
Wulfgar 1		8	2	2		2	2	1		ben	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	1				Wulfgar 1
Eadmund		3	3	3		3	3	2		2	3	3	3	3	4	3	4					Eadmund
Wulfaf		4	4	4		4	4	3			4	4	4	4	5	[> Disappears						Wulfaf
Ælfric		2	5	5		5	5	4		3	4	5	5	5	6	13	5	2				Ælfric
Ælfstan 1			6	6		6	5	5		4	5	6	6	ben	7	5	6					Ælfstan 1
Ælfstan 2			7	7		7	7			5	6	7	7	6	6							Ælfstan 2
Æltheah (Son of Ealhhelm)			9	8		7				6	7	8	8	7	8	7	7	3				Æltheah (Son of Ealhhelm)
Ælfsize 1		9	12	10		8	7	6		8	9	10	10	9	10	9	2 ben	9				Ælfsize 1
Eadric (?Brother of H.K.)		11 (?ben)																				Eadric (?Brother of H.K.)
Æthe(l)red 1		13	11	9		9	6			7	8	9	9	8	9	8	8					Æthe(l)red 1
Ælfred		6										13	14		12			4				Ælfred
Wihthgar		5	14	12		10	10	8			10	11	12	12	11	11	10	7				Wihthgar
Ordheah			10	8							13	12	[> Disappears									Ordheah
Æthe(l)red 2			13	11			8			9	10	11	11	10								Æthe(l)red 2
Wulfic 1 (?Cufing)		7	15	13		11		7		11	15	15	12	12	12	4	11	6				Wulfic 1 (?Cufing)
Ælfsize 2		12	16	14		12				12	13	16	16	13								Ælfsize 2
Wulhelm		14	17	15						14	14	17	17	14		15	12	8				Wulhelm
Æthelgeard						9					14	13			ben			5				Æthelgeard

Appendix V: King Edmund's Diplomas 944 x 946

	Sawyer Archive BA ASC Date Type	495 Eve 944	493 Wilt 944	502 Shaff 944	503 OMW 944	494 Ab 944	497 CCC Em. 'c' 944	501 StAC 944	498 Glast 944	504 Glast 944	500 Ab Em. 'c' 944	505 NMW 945	507 BSIE sp? 945	506 Sel Em. 'c' 945	508 Bath 946	509 Glast Dn B 946	510 CCC Em. 'c' 946	514 Roch ?-943 sp?	Sawyer Archive BA ASC Date Type
Royals		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	Royals
Edmund																			Edmund
Eadgifu		2 mat. r.	1 mat. r.			2 mat. r.	2 mat. r.	2 mat. r.				2 mat. r.		2 mat. r.					Eadgifu
Eadred		1 fra. r.				1 fra. r.	1 fra. r.	1 fra. r.				1 fra. r.		1 fra. r.					Eadred
Ælfifu																		3 concubina r.	Ælfifu
Ecclesiastics																			Ecclesiastics
Oda (Cant.)		1	1	1	1	1		[1]	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1			Oda (Cant.)
Wulfstan (York)		2	2			2		2			2		2						Wulfstan (York)
Theodred (Lon.)		3*	3*	2*	2*	3*		3*			10	2*	3*	2					Theodred (Lon.)
Ælfheah (Win.)		4*	4*		3*	3*		4*			2*	3	3*	4*			2*		Ælfheah (Win.)
Canwald (Wor.)		5	5		5	4		5			3	11	4	5	3				Canwald (Wor.)
Ælfric (Here.)		ben	6		4	5		6			4	7	5		4				Ælfric (Here.)
Ælfred (Sel.)		6	8		7	6		7			8	6		ben	6				Ælfred (Sel.)
Burgic (Roch.)					6			9			9	7						3	ben
Wulfsgie (Sherb.)		8	9			8		11			5				7				Wulfsgie (Sherb.)
Æthelgar (Cred.)		7	7		8	7		8			5	4	8		5				8
Wulhelm (Wells)		9	10		9	9		10			6				8				Wulhelm (Wells)
Æthelwold (Dorch.)													9						Æthelwold (Dorch.)
Others																			Others
Æthelnoth											pb	ben							Æthelnoth
Abbots																			Abbots
Dunstan																1			Dunstan
Ealdormen																			Ealdormen
Wulfgar 1													<->						1
Æthelstan 'Half King'		1	1		1	1			ben		1		*		2		2		2
Æthelwold (Brother of H.K.)		2	2		2	2		2			2		*		1		1		1
Æthelstan 2		3	3		3	3		3							5				Æthelstan 2
Ealhhelm		4	5		4	4		4			3		*		6				Ealhhelm
Æthelmund		5	6		5	6		5					*						Æthelmund
Uhtred								7							8				Uhtred
Eadric (Brother of H.K.)			4		7	5		6							4				Eadric (Brother of H.K.)
Wulfgar 2														Minister >]	3				Wulfgar 2
Ælfwold				6															Ælfwold
Eadmund															7				Eadmund
Ælfgar													*						Ælfgar
Scule																			4
Osferth																			[5]
Thegns																			Thegns
Odda																			8
Wulfgar 1		1	1	ben	1	1		1			1								Odda
Eadmund 1		2	2		2	2		2			3		*		1				Wulfgar 1
Ælfric					12						9								10
Ælfstan 1		4	4		4	6		6 ben			2		*		2		4		4
Ælfstan 2					5	7		<-Disappears											
Ælfheah (Son of Ealhhelm)					10	6	8 ben	8			5		*		5				Ælfheah (Son of Ealhhelm)
Ælfsige 1		3	5		8	4		4			4		*		3				3
Æthe(l)fred 1		11	12		7	12		11					*						Æthe(l)fred 1
Ælfred		10	11		11	11		14			10		*						Ælfred
Wihtgar		9	9		10	10		13			8		*						11
Ordheah																			5
Æthe(l)fred 2			14		9														Æthe(l)fred 2
Wulfic 1 (?Cufing)		5	3		3	3		3			7		*		4				2
Wulfic 2 (?Dunstan's Brother)		8	6			5		5							6				7
Ælfsige 2		6	7		13			7											<-Disappears
Æthelgeard		7	8		9	12					6		*		10				Æthelgeard