Cnut for Danelaw, Cnut against Swein:

Two aspects on the process of Cnut' conquest of England*

Minoru OZAWA

1. Introduction

Cnut the Great obtained the crown of England in 1017, next that of Denmark in 1019 and at last that of Norway in 1028, and died in 1035.[1] His established territory has been sometimes called North Sea empire. For many years this "empire" has been examined by British and Danish scholars like J. C. H. R. Steenstrup, L. M. Larson, A. E. Christensen, M. K. Lawson and N. Lund.[2] However, despite the commonly recognized historical importance of Cnut, plenty of problems remain to be solved.[3] Some of the problems concern Denmark where Cnut was brought up in his youth. As many scholars claimed, Cnut, certainly, regarded England as main territory rather than Denmark. Here we should emphasize the fact that Cnut was originally a Viking leader of Danish origin. It seems to me that his ethnicity gave lasting influence on each process of incursions, conquest and government of England implicitly and explicitly.

In this article, in order to know Cnut's government of England, I would like to look closer at two aspects of the process of his conquest which few scholars have discussed on. Both of the aspects concern the problems depending on his ethnicity. The next chapter will deal with the relationship between the Danelaw and the Jelling kings, and the chapter 3 about what Swein Forkbeard left to his son Cnut.

---

* This article is a revised and enlarged version of the paper read at the symposium "The Danelaw Area: Reconsideration" held at the 23rd Western Branch Conference of The Japan Society for Medieval English Studies at Himeji Dokkyo University on 9 June 2007.

[1] Concerning Cnut in general, Rumble. A. ed. *The Reign of Cnut: King of England, Denmark and Norway*. London, 1994; Lawson, M. K. *Cnut. The Danes in England in the Early Eleventh Century*. London and New York, 1993; Larson, L. M. *Canute the Great and the Rise of Danish Imperialism during the Viking Age*. New York and London, 1912.

[2] In addition to the books cited in note 2, Steenstrup, J. C. H. R. *Normannerne 4: Danelag*. Kjøbenhavn, 1882; Christensen, A. E. *Vikingetidens Danmark paa oldhistorisk baggrund*. København, 1969; Lund, N. *De hærger og de brænder. Danmark og England i vikingetiden*. 2 ed. København, 1997.

[3] Concerning the role of Cnut in Danish history, see Lund, N. "Cnut's Danish kingdom." *The Reign of Cnut*, pp. 27-42.

2. Danelaw for the Jelling kings

The first years of the 21st century were a turning-point for the Danelaw studies. For two voluminous collected papers, the one *Cultures in Contact* in 2000 and the other *Vikings and the Danelaw* in 2001, were published successively.[4] The editors of the former book were D. M. Hadley and J. D. Richards while that of the latter was J. Graham-Campbell. To our interest, most of contributors to two books including all of the three editors were archaeologists, not historians. This suggests that a field of archaeology has recently given indispensable information to the present Viking Age studies.[5] Apparently archaeology has a main role of academic debates on problems of the Vikings in the British Isles rather than history used to have. Nevertheless this tendency does not mean that history became the relics of the past to be forgotten. On the contrary history gained more and more importance than it used to be. History needs archaeological detail data of the material and archaeology presupposes the historical context which written sources can reconstruct. Now history and archaeology wants each other.[6] The Danelaw studies, in fact, would offer us one of the best examples of the combination of history and archaeology.

What was Danelaw ? Although there has been much debate on the established definition of the Danelaw for a few generations,[7] it could be recognized that it was created legally by concluding a peace treaty between the king Alfred of Wessex and Guthrum, one of the leaders of 'Great Army' in c.890. [8] This treaty prescribed the borderline between settlement of the English and that of the Danes as "up Thames, and then up the Lea, and along the Lea to its source, then in a straight line to Bedford, then up the Ouse to Watling Street".[9] Partly

---

[4] Hadley, D, M. and J. D. Richards eds. *Cultures in Contact. Scandinavian Settlement in England in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries*. Turnhout, 2000; Graham-Campbell, J. et al.eds. *Vikings and the Danelaw. Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress*. Oxford, 2001.

[5] Richards, J. D. *Viking Age England*. 2 ed. Stroud, 2000. The following studies by historians still remain to be indispensable. Hart, C. *The Danelaw*. London and Rio Grande, 1992; Stenton, F. M. "The Danes in England." *Proceedings of the British Academy* 13 (1927): 203-46; Id. *Types of Manorial Structure in the Northern Danelaw*. Oxford, 1910.

[6] For example, Hadley, D. M. *The Vikings in England: Settlement, Society and Culture*. Manchester, 2006.2

[7] Concerning the debate, see Abrams, L. "Edward the Elder's Danelaw." *Edward the Elder 899-924*. Ed. N. J. Higham and D. H. Hill. London and New York, 2001, pp. 128-33.

[8] Concerning recent discussion of this treaty, see Kershaw, P. "The Alfred-Guthrum Treaty: scripting accommodation and interaction in Viking Age England." *Cultures in Contact*, pp. 43-64.

[9] Whitelock, D. et al.eds. *English Historical Documents* vol. I, *c. 500-1042*. London, 1979, No 34, p.

because of that, the Danes intensively settled in the northern part of England. While the social structure of rural areas was changing, towns also grew rapidly in the Danelaw in the 10th and 11th centuries.[10] Due to the flourishing of both internal and international trade and markets, York and the so-called Five Boroughs (Lincoln, Nottingham, Stamford, Leicester and Derby) were well established and developed in later centuries.[11] Such a phenomenon reflects one of the active aspects caused by interchange with the Danes. However we should remember the arguments presented by recent studies that even after the treaty of c.890 was concluded there settled much more indigenous English in the Danelaw than Danish newcomers and, more importantly, that the Danish settlers belonged to the higher class of the social structure in the Danelaw. [12] Nevertheless, because of the very reason that the Danes there were elites, they remained to be important for the Danes who came from their fatherland.

We shall turn to the contemporary situation in Denmark. Jelling, a central site of the Jutland peninsula, is supposed to have been the birthplace of a new dynasty of Denmark in the earlier half of the 10th century.[13] Gorm the Old, whose detail past was unknown, established a power centre in Jelling and, by his marriage with Thyra, a daughter of a local elite, extended his power and territory through Jutland peninsula to the Funen.[14] In fact, his

---

416.

[10] Pedersen, A. "Anglo-Danish contact across the North Sea in the eleventh century: a survey of the Danish archaeological evidence." *Scandinavia and Europe 800-1350: Contact, Conflict, and Coexistence.* Ed. A. Holman. Turnhout, 2004, pp. 43-67.

[11] Hadley, *The Vikings in England*, pp. 145-91; Hall, R. "Anglo-Scandinavian urban development in the East Midlands." *Vikings and Danelaw*, pp. 143-55. A good example of influence to the development of London by the Danes, see Nightingale, P. "The origin of the court of Husting and Danish influence on London's development into a capital city." *English Historical Review* 102 (1987): pp. 559-578.

[12] Concerning a development of recent historiography, see Hadley, D. M. "Viking and native: rethinking identity in the Danelaw." *Early Medieval Europe* 11-1 (2002): 45-70.

[13] For Danish history, Jelling has been the focal point of discussion to be solved. See, Staecker, J. "Jelling - Mythen und Realität." *Der Ostseeraum und Kontinentaleuropa 1100-1600. Einflußnahme - Rezeption - Wandel.* Ed. D. Kattinger et al., Schwerin, 2004, pp. 77-102; Hvaas, S. "Jelling - Schon in der Wikingerzeit eine tausendjährige Siedlung." *Studien zur Archäologie des Ostseeraumes. Von der Eisenzeit zum Mittelalter. Festschrift für Mochael Müller-Wille.* Ed. A. Weese, Neumünster, 1998, pp. 161-176; Krough, K. J. "The royal Viking-Age monuments at Jelling in the light of recent archaeological excavations." *Acta Archaeologica* 53 (1982): 183-216; Christensen, A. E. "The Jelling monuments." *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 8 (1975): 7-21.

[14] Concerning the early history of the Jelling dynasty which featured the role of Thyra, Sawyer, B. and P. H. Sawyer "A Gormless history ? The Jelling dynasty revisited." *Runica - Germanica - Medievalia.*

son Harald Bluetooth was the real founder of the Jelling dynasty.[15] According to one of the most famous rune stones in Denmark, he accomplished three distinguished deeds, namely unification of Denmark, reign of Norway and Christianization of Denmark.[16] No doubt a combination of these deeds changed the Danish society radically in the late 10th century. Moreover we should remember another aspect of a changing Danish society: the second raids to the British Isles from 980 on.[17] Judging form contemporary sources, there is little probability that Harald launched abroad with his army, but, after the expulsion of his father from Denmark in 987, the next king Swein Forkbeard led active expeditions to the British Isles.[18] The first witness of his name was an entry of 994 in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (Later *Chronicle*) , where he ravaged London together with a Norse leader Olaf Tryggvason and 94 ships.[19] In the last phase of 20 years of his successive raids, Swein reached the crown of England in 1013, when the Danish dynasty began in England. Here we do not discuss why such aggressive raids occurred at the very time, but at least we should not dismiss the one fact that plenty of Danish elites took part in the expeditions led by some of the most powerful Danish leaders including Swein and Cnut. Some of them died in battles, some settled in England, and some returned back to Denmark[20]. In any case, we cannot doubt that the frequency of intercommunication between the British Isles and Denmark was intensified.

Berlin and New York, 2003, pp. 689-706; Sawyer, P. H. *Da Danmark blev Danmark. Fra ca. år 700 til ca. 1050.* København, 1988.

[15] From the archaeological perspective, the following article is important. Roesdahl, E. "Harald Blauzahn - ein dänischer Wikingerkönig aus archäologischer Sicht." *Europa im 10. Jahrhundert. Archäologie einer Aufbruchszeit.* Ed. J. Henning, Mainz, 2002, pp. 95-108.

[16] Jacobsen, Lis and E. Moltke eds. *Dansk Runeindskirfter. Text.* København, 1941, No 42: Side A: **haraltr : kunukR : baþ : kaurua kubl : þausi : aft : kurmfaþursin aukaft : þaurui : muþur : sina sa haraltr (:) ias : saR uan tanmaurk;** Side B: **ala auk nuruiak;** Side C: **auk tani (karþi) kristna.**

[17] Loyn, H. R. *The Vikings in Britain.* London, 1977.

[18] Concerning several aspects of Swein Forkbeard, see Howard, I. *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions and the Danish Conquest of England, 991-1017.* London, 2003.

[19] Plummer, Ch. *Two of the Saxon Chronicles. Parallel. A Revised Text.* Vol. 1, Oxford, 1892 (Later TSC) , 994, p.127: Her on þisum geare com Anlaf & Swegen to Lunden byrig on Nativitas sce Marie mid iiii & hundnigontigum scipum. See also Sawyer, P. H. "Ethelred II, Olaf Tryggvason, and the conversion of Norway." *Scandinavian Studies* 59 (1987): 299-307.

[20] Not only written sources but also rune stones tells us about intercommunication between the British Isles and Scandinavia. See Jesch, J. *Ships and Men in the Late Viking Age. The Vocabulary of Runic Inscriptions and Skaldic Verse.* Woodbridge, 2001, chapter 2 & 3.

What kind of role did the Danelaw play on the emerging Jelling dynasty ? In the first place, it is probable that some of elites in the Danelaw supplied the Jelling kings and their army with provisions and supporting members for ravage. Take an example of the so-called massacre of St Brice's Day on November 13 in 1002.[21] According to the *Chronicle*, Ethelred II "ordered to be slain all the Danish men who were in England because the king had been informed that they would treacherously deprive him, and then all his councillors, of life, and possess this kingdom afterwards".[22] Although it is, of course, reasonable that an entry of the *Chronicle* including this order is an exaggeration, another testimony on this case can be found in a charter given by Ethelred to St Frideswide's Abbey, Oxford in 1004.[23] Therefore we can accept a possibility that the English king ill-treated with his potential enemy in England. Here we should pay attention to an episode that one of the victims of this massacre was an Anglo-Saxon elite Pallig's wife Gunhild, who was also Swein Forkbeard's sister.[24] Certainly there have been some discussions whether this episode was reliable or not, but we could accept it as a possible example of intermarriage between the English elite and the Danish elite by taking into consideration another testimony. According to the entry of 993 of the *Chronicle*, "a very large English army was collected, and when they should have joined battle, the leaders, namely Fræna, Godowine and Frythegyst first stated the flight".[25] Why did they start the flight? John of Worcester, a historian of the 12th century, added the reason to the original sentence of the *Chronicle*: "Because they were Danish in their father's side."[26] This

---

[21] Some debates on this case are presented in Williams, A. *Æthelred the Unready. The Ill-Counselled King*. 2003, London, pp. 52-55.

[22] In this article I follow D. Whitelock's translation of: Whitelock, D., D. C. Douglas and S. I. Tucker eds. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Revised Translation* (Later ASC) , New Jersey, 1961, p. 86.

[23] Sawyer, P. H. *Anglo-Saxon Charters. An Annotated List and Bibliography*. London, 1968, No 909; *English Historical Documents*, No. 127, pp. 590-93. This charter is considerably important for a study about the Scandinavians in the Danelaw. For instance, see Williams, A. "'Cockles amongst the wheat': Danes and English in the western Midlands in the first half of the eleventh century." *Midlands History* 11 (1986): 1-22; Hadely, D. M. "'Cockles amongst the wheat': the Scandinavians in England." *Social Identity in Early Medieval Britain*. Ed. W. O. Frazer and A Tyrell, Leicester, 2000, pp. 111-135.

[24] This information depends on a 12th century historian William of Malmesbury. See Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions*, pp. 62-63.

[25] ASC, 993, p. 83; TSC, 993, p. 127: Þa ge gaderode man swiðe mycele fyrde. & þa hi to gædere gan sceoldan. þa on stealdon þa heretogan ærest þone fleam. þ wæs Fræna. & Godwine. & Friðegist.

[26] Darlington, R. R. and P. McGurk eds. *The Chronicle of John of Worcester*. Vol. II. Oxford, 1995, p. 412: ...quia ex paterno genere Danici fuerunt ...

part of the sentence did not only mean that unpleasant emotion against the Danes prevailed among the English, but also that it was not uncommon that a Danish man got married with an English woman. Moreover we can add another example of importance: Cnut got married with Ælfgifu, a daughter of an ealdorman Æflhelm of South Nortumbria, before 1017.[27] She bore two sons named Harold Harefoot, a king of England (1037-40)[28] and Swein, a ruler of Norway, (1030-35) . She became regent of her son Swein in 1030. Compared to another Cnut's wife of the same name, little information on the first Ælfgifu was known to us. However, we cannot deny that this marriage with a daughter of a powerful landowner in the Danelaw brought the young Cnut to an indispensable political and economic base in the Danelaw.

These above-mentioned facts can suggest us that there would be intermarriage between the Danes and the English elites, especially in the Danelaw, even in the troubled times. This might result from a long time of intercommunication between the British Isles and Denmark. Not a few elites in the Danelaw, of course, fought against the Jelling kings, but some would support the Danes by supplying with provisions in England. Cnut's conquest of England depended partly on relationship based on the marriage of the Danes with the English.

3. A legacy of Swein Forkbeard

Here, briefly, we would like to follow a political history between the death of Swein and the enthroning of Cnut. Swein Forkbeard died on February 3, 1014. His sudden death heard, English councillors asked the former king Ethelred, who was expelled to Normandy, to return to the original English throne on the condition that "he would govern them more justly than he did before".[29] After Ethelred died in 1016, the crown was followed by his son Edmund Ironside.[30] In the next year Cnut won the battle against Edmund at Ashingdon in Essex on October 18, 1016 and then divided the territory by the treaty of Alney: "Edmund succeeded to

---

[27] Concerning the first Ælfgifu, Campbell, M. W. "Queen Emma and Ælfgifu of Northampton: Canute the Great's women." *Mediaeval Scandinavia* 4 (1971): 66-79.

[28] Keynes, S. "Harold Harefoot." *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England.* Ed. M. Lapidge et al. Oxford, 1999, p. 229.

[29] ASC, 1014, p. 93; TSC, 1014, p. 145: ...he hi rihtlicor healdan wolde þonne he ær dyde.

[30] Concerning Edmund Ironside, see Stenton, F. *Anglo-Saxon England.* 3 ed. Oxford, 1972, pp. 390-393; Keynes, S. "Edmund Ironside." *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England.* p. 160.

Wessex and Cnut to Mercia".[31] Hereby Cnut obtained considerable power to reign over a part of England. However, due to the sudden death of Edmund in the same year, the English councillors accepted Cnut as their sovereign in 1017.[32]

Because of lack of detail description of the *Chronicle*, we cannot easily know the way in which Cnut governed England in the earlier stage of his reign. However, in order to proceed further, we should reconstruct the context of his reign even if based on fragmentary testimony. The most important point is that successive invasions from 980 onward would fill the mind of the English with their traumatic horror against the Danes. The reason is that the second raid of the Danes in great extent accompanied not only the ravage of the properties but also the destruction of symbols of the Christian kingdom. I will show some examples in the following. Firstly, we should refer to the devastation of towns, churches and monasteries all over the British Isles. Not to mention, the ethnic name of the Danes has been memorized both by the contemporaries and even by us in relation with their ravage of the country. While the "Great Army (micel here) " in the later half of the 9th century was also enormous,[33] Swein's successive invasions and subsequent devastation, which were more organized than in the 9th century, marked one of the most terrible memories of the English[34]. His army with no hesitation destroyed even such sacred sites for the Christians as churches and monasteries and brought horses and food into requisition. Literate clerics and monks, therefore, amplified their fear against the Danes by describing with some exaggeration how much damage Swein's army brought to their country.[35] Secondly, we meet the imposition of the so-called Danegeld. However, regards as the Danegeld, a technical term coined later, we should make a distinction between regular *heregeld* and irregular *gafol*. The former is tax imposed on the inhabitants by English rulers and the latter tribute levied in order to pay for the Danes in

---

[31] ASC, 1016, p. 96 ; TSC, 1016, p. 153; & feng Eadmund cing to Weast Seaxan & Cnut to Myrcean.

[32] ASC, 1017, p. 97.

[33] Concerning the "Great Army", see Stenton. *Anglo-Saxon England.* pp.239-76; Biddle, M. and B. Kjølbye-Biddle "Repton and the Vikings." *Antiquity* 66 (1992): 36-51.

[34] One of the distinguished differences between he first raids in the 9th century and the second ones around 1000 lies in systematic organization which leads not only to size of the army but also to tactics and strategy of battle. Considering the reason, we should remember the development of Danish society in the 10th century. See, for instance, Morris, Guy A. E. "Violence and late Viking Age Scandinavian social order." *Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West.* Ed. G. Halsall, Woodbridge, 1998, pp. 141-156.

[35] Sawyer, P. H. *The Age of the Vikings.* 2 ed. London, 1972, chapter 1.

exchange for a temporary peace.[36] According to the *Chronicle*, 10000 pounds of *gafol* were collected in 991; 16000 in 994; 24000 in 1002; 36000 in 1007; 3000 in Kent in 1009; 48000 in 1012; 21000 in 1014; 72000 in England and 10500 in London in 1018; and 21099 in 1041.[37] As M. K. Lawson explicitly presented us, these tributes of vast amount were collected efficiently and effectively on the basis of Anglo-Saxon administration system.[38] However the sequence of collections no doubt accumulated the English complaints against Swein and the Danes. Archbishop Wulfstan of York appealed to his people in his famous sermon *Semo Lupi ad Anglos* in 1014 that

> For it is clear and manifest in us all that we have previously transgressed more than we have amended, and therefore much is assailing this people. Things have not gone well now for a long time at home or abroad, but there has been devastation and famine, burning and bloodshed in every district again and again; and stealing and killing, sedition and pestilence, murrain and disease, malice and hate and spoliation by robbers have harmed us very grievously, and monstrous taxes have afflicted us greatly, and ad seasons have very often caused us failure of crops. For now for many years, as it may seem, there have been in this country many injustices and wavering loyalties among men everywhere.[39]

His argument is followed by his own interesting logic that the English owes such a heavy

---

[36] See Keynes, S. "Heregeld." *Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England.* p. 235. See also Willams. *Æthelred the Unready.* pp. 151-153.

[37] Concerning each amount of *gafol*, see corresponding entry of the *Chronicle.*

[38] A starting-point of discussion on the danegeld is Lawson, M. K. "The collection of Danegeld and Heregeld in the reigns of Aethelred II and Cnut." *English Historical Review* 99 (1984): 721-38. See also Gillingham, J. '"The Most Precious Jewel in the English Crown': levels of Danegeld and Heregeld in the early eleventh century." *English Historical Review* 104 (1989): 373-84; Lawson, M. K. '"Those stories look true': levels of taxation in the reigns of Aethelred II and Cnut." *English Historical Review* 104 (1989): 385-406; Gillingham, J. "Chronicles and coins as evidence for levels of tribute and taxation in late tenth- and early eleventh-century England." *English Historical Review* 105 (1999): 939-50; Lawson, M. K. "Danegeld and Heregeld once more." *English Historical Review* 105 (1990): 951-61.

[39] *English Historical Documents.* No 240, pp. 930-31; Bernstein, M. *The Electronic Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* (http://english3.fsu.edu/~wulfstan/) : Forþam hit is on us eallum swutol & gesene þæt we ær þysan oftor bræcan þonne we bettan, & þy is þysse þeode fela onsæge. Ne dohte hit nu lange inne ne ute: ac wæs here & hungor, nu bryne & blodgyte on gewelhwylcan ende oft & gelome. & us stalu & cwalu, stric & steorfa, orfcwealm & uncoþu, hol & hete, & rypera reaflac derede swyþe þearle. & us ungylda swyðe gedrohtan, & us unwedera foroft weoldan unwæstma; forþam on þysan earde wæs, swa hit þincan mæg, nu fela geara unrihta fela & tealte getrywða æghwær mid mannum.

burden as tributes to their own faults. Here it is important that the collection of the danegelt caused complaint of the English inhabitants to the Danes, even if Wulfstan called on them to reflect their own conduct in his sermons. Lastly but the most impressive to the Christians was the capture and killing of the Archbishop Ælfheah of Canterbury on April 19, 1012. The *Chronicle* told about the scene of the day that

> They [=the Danes] pelted him [=Ælfheah] with bones and with ox-heads, and one of them struck him on the head with the back of an axe, that he sank down with the blow, and his holy blood fell on the ground, and so he sent his holy soul to God's kingdom.[40]

Hereby we can understand how shocking it was to kill the top of the centre of the English clerical hierarchy, probably as it was true of St Thomas Becket in the 12th century. Resulting from this cruel killing of the archbishop, it would be reasonable that the English had their ill-feeling to Swein, a symbol of the "pagan people" from Denmark, although Swein and some of the Danes in fact were not pagan but Christian[41].

Most of the above-mentioned deals to the English were not Cnut's but his father's or his army's. However the English would never forget their sufferings imposed by the Danes. For the injured party both Swein and Cnut were leaders belonging to the same Danes. Although the damage by Swein was much more serious than that by Cnut, nevertheless it is inevitable that Cnut succeeded to his father's infamous reputation. Scholars have often omitted this negative legacy sticking to Cnut, but it is such a reputation that partly decided the context in which Cnut did his deeds as the English king. The fact that the *Chronicle* gave a few words to Cnut's reign in contrast to a lot of ones to Ethelred II and Edward the Confessor would be a reflection of collective attitudes by the English to Cnut[42]. Then, what did Cnut have to do at

---

[40] ASC, 1012, pp. 91-92; TSC, 1012, p. 142: & sloh hine þa an heora mid anre æxe yre on þet heafod. þet he mid þam dynte niðer asah. & his halige blod on ða eorðan feoll. & his þa haligan sawle to Godes rice asende.

[41] One of the latest studies about Christianization of Denmark is, Gelting, M. H. "The kingdom of Denmark." *Christianization and the Rise of Christian Monarchy. Scandinavia, Central Europe and Rus' c.900-1200*. Ed. N. Berend, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 73-120; see also Lund, N. "Mission I Danmark før Harald Blåtands dåb." *Kristendomen i Danmark før 1050. Et symposium i Roskilde, den 5.-7-februar 2003*. Ed. N. Lund, Roskilde, 2004, pp. 20-27.

[42] Relationship between the historiography of the Chronicle and collective attitudes of writers to rulers should be dug in deeper. For a good introductory example, Keynes, S. "A tale of two kings. Alfred the Great and Aethelred the Unready." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th series* 36 (1986):

first as the new English king ? First of all, it would be the most important task to cleanse a heavy burden of his infamous reputation together with his father's name. The reason is clear: Cnut needed to be supported by literate governmental bureaucracy consisting mostly of clerics and monks, in order to administrate his new kingdom as efficiently as the former rulers used to do.

Such a context accepted in our mind, we shall reconsider Cnut's deeds in the *Chronicle*. Firstly, He consecrated a new minster at Ashingdon, Sussex, where the above-mentioned bitter battle broke in 1016.[43] As was shown, a victory of Cnut over Edmund in the battle led to the decisive step to take England into his hands. Of course, it also accompanied a lot of the fallen army. Therefore, in the Christian way, Cnut appeased the English mind to consecrate a minster in memory of the victims of this hard battle, whether they were the English or the Danes. In addition to this case, a lot of churches and monasteries were built, restored and dedicated with land, several rights and luxurious books by the new king from the beginning to the end of his reign. We should recognize that Cnut was one of the most active rulers who could invest much money to the Christian organization both in Anglo-Saxon times and in contemporary Latin Christendom.[44] Cnut's perspective extended to his relationship with the Roman See.[45] Secondly the collection of the *gafol* was abolished. As was already mentioned, the *gafol* gave heavy pressure on inhabitants, which caused their complaints to the Danes. Certainly Cnut imposed the tribute on the English once in 1018, but this was the only case. Probably it was used to have a part of the Danes go back to Denmark for reward. The Chronicle, indeed, told us that "Then some of the army went to Denmark, and 40 ships remained with King Cnut, and the Danes and the English reached an agreement at Oxford."[46] Thirdly, Cnut got married with Emma on August 1, 1017. Emma, who was also called

---

195-217; Clark, C. "The narrative mode of The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle before the Conquest." *England before the Conquest: Studies in Primary Sources presented to Dorothy Whitelock.* Ed. P. Clemoes and K. Hughes, Cambridge, 1971, pp. 215-235.

[43] ASC, 1020, p. 98: TSC, 1020, p. 154: & ge halgodan & mynster æt Assandune. The precise site of Ashingdon has not been known to us.

[44] For instance, Heslop, T. A. "The production of de luxe manuscripts and the patronage of king Cnut and queen Emma." *Anglo-Saxon England* 19 (1990): 151-95; Lawson, *Cnut*. pp. 117-160.

[45] See, Smith, J. *Europe after Rome. A New Cultural History 500-1000*. Oxford, 2005.

[46] ASC, 1018, p. 97: TSC, 1018, p. 155: & se here ferde þa sum to Denmearcon. & xl scipo belaf mid þam cyninge Cnute. & Dene & Engle wurdon sammæle æt Oxna forda.

Ælfgifu, was a daughter of the duke Richard I of Normandy.[47] She had been married with the former king Ethelred II of England and bore Alfred Ætheling and Edward who was later called the Confessor. One of the reasons that Ethelred and Cnut hoped to be married with her was that Normandy was one of the most prominent principalities in Northern Europe.[48] Moreover this marriage gave him another merit of internal politics in England. Thereby he could avoid expected struggles against the sons of Ethelred and Emma at the moment although there remained a problem that he had been married with another Ælfgifu. Lastly nobody would doubt that one of the most distinguished deeds by the new king Cnut was to proclaim the so-called Cnut's law codes.[49] These codes, which are the best established ones in style and content in a long history of Anglo-Saxon laws, consist of two parts, the one 26 sentences for clerics and the other 84 for laymen. A legal structure of the codes had influenced at least partly on subsequent English law codes into medieval common law. These law codes were proclaimed in 1020-21, when Cnut came back to England after he settled some problems in Denmark and began to strengthen his government of England proper.[50]

It seems to me that a series of these above-mentioned deeds by Cnut was a programmed policy in order to gain the credence from the English that he was a king of justice. When he obtained the English crown in 1017, Cnut himself did not understand completely how the English administration system worked and how he could use it as effectively as the former

---

[47] Compared to the first Ælfgifu, the second has had the privilege to be studied. As one of the most important fruits, Stafford, P. *Queen Emma and Queen Edith: Queenship and Women's Power in Eleventh-Century England.* Oxford, 1997.

[48] First of all, we should refer to Bates, D. *Normandy before 1066.* London, 1982. Relationship between the Scandinavians and Normandy, see Breese, L. W. "The persistence of Scandinavian connections in Normandy in the tenth and eleventh centuries." *Viator* 7 (1977): 47-61; Houts, E. M. C. van. "The political relations between Normandy and England before 1066 according to the Gesta Normannorum Ducum." *Les Mutations socio-culturelles au tournant des 11e-12e siècle: Actes du 4e Colloque internationale Anselmien.* Ed. R. Foreville, Paris, 1984, pp. 85-97.

[49] Concerning the complicated process of making Cnut's law codes, see Wormald, P. *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century, Vol. 1: Legislation and its Limits.* Oxford, 1999, pp. 345-66; Stafford, P. "The laws of Cnut and the history of Anglo-Saxon royal promises." *Anglo-Saxon England* 10 (1982): 173-90. The starting-point remains still, Whitelock, D. "Wulfstan and the laws of Cnut." *English Historical Review* 68 (1948): 433-52; Id. "Wulfstan's authorship of Cnut's laws." *English Historical Review* 70 (1955): 72-85.

[50] It is assumed that Cnut proclaimed the former version of the law codes in 1018. Kennedy, A. G. "Cnut's law code of 1018." *Anglo-Saxon England* (1983): 57-81.

kings did.[51] However it seems that his administration of the new state was successfully working even in the earlier stage of his reign. Who supported and advised him ? No doubt the Archbishop Wulfstan of York did. He was the bishop of London, then the archbishop of York.[52] Familiar with continental knowledge of canon laws and ideology,[53] he played a leading role in politics and administration from the times of Ethelred II to Cnut. As P. Wormald convincingly claimed,[54] the archbishop hoped for the restoration of a social order which the Danes upset for more than 30 years. Wulfstan needed Cnut's power to accomplish his plan to restore Edger and Dunstan' times, while Cnut required Wulfstan's ability to manage the administration system of England. Through cooperation with the archbishop the Danish king began to create a new state which was different from that of Ethelred II.

4. Conclusion

We have already seen two aspects on the process of Cnut' conquest of England: one is cooperation with the Danes in the Danelaw and the other infamous reputation succeeded by his father Swein. The former was his merit in the process of conquest, but the latter was his demerit in his government. These aspects, both of which concerned Cnut's ethnicity, would have a large impact on Cnut's political choice in England although little attention has paid to them by scholars. The fact that Cnut was originally a Dane should be had in common by those interested in Anglo Saxon history. From this viewpoint not a few problems remain to be solved.

---

[51] Concerning administration system in the late Anglo-Saxon age, see Campbell, J. "Observation on English Government from the Tenth to the Twelfth Century." *Essays in Anglo-Saxon History*. London and Ronceverte, 1986, pp. 155-70; Keynes, S. "Royal government and the written word in late Anglo-Saxon England." *The Uses of Literacy in Early Medieval Europe*. Ed. R. McKitterick, Cambridge, 1990, pp. 226-57.

[52] Basically still, Whitelock, D. "Archbishop Wulfstan, Homilist and Statesman." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 4th series* 24 (1942): 25-45. However now we should consult to the new Wullfstan in Wormald, P. "Archbishop Wulfstan: Eleventh Century State-Builder." *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York. The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conferenc*e. Ed. M. Townend, Turnhout, 2004, pp. 9-27.

[53] Hill, J. "Archbishop Wulfstan: Reformer ?." *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York*, pp. 309-324; Jost, K. "Einige Wulfstantexte und ihre Quellen." *Anglia* 56 (1932): 265-315.

[54] Wormald, P. "Archbishop Wulfstan and the Holiness of Society." *Legal Culture in the Early Medieval West. Law as Text, Image and Experience*. London, 1999, pp. 225-51; Lawson, M. K. "Archbishop Wulfstan and the homiletic element in the laws of Æthelred II and Cnut." *English Historical Review* 107 (1992): 565-586.