




The Norman Conquest

The Anglo Saxon Chronicle

Jan Seidensticker & Philipp Preker

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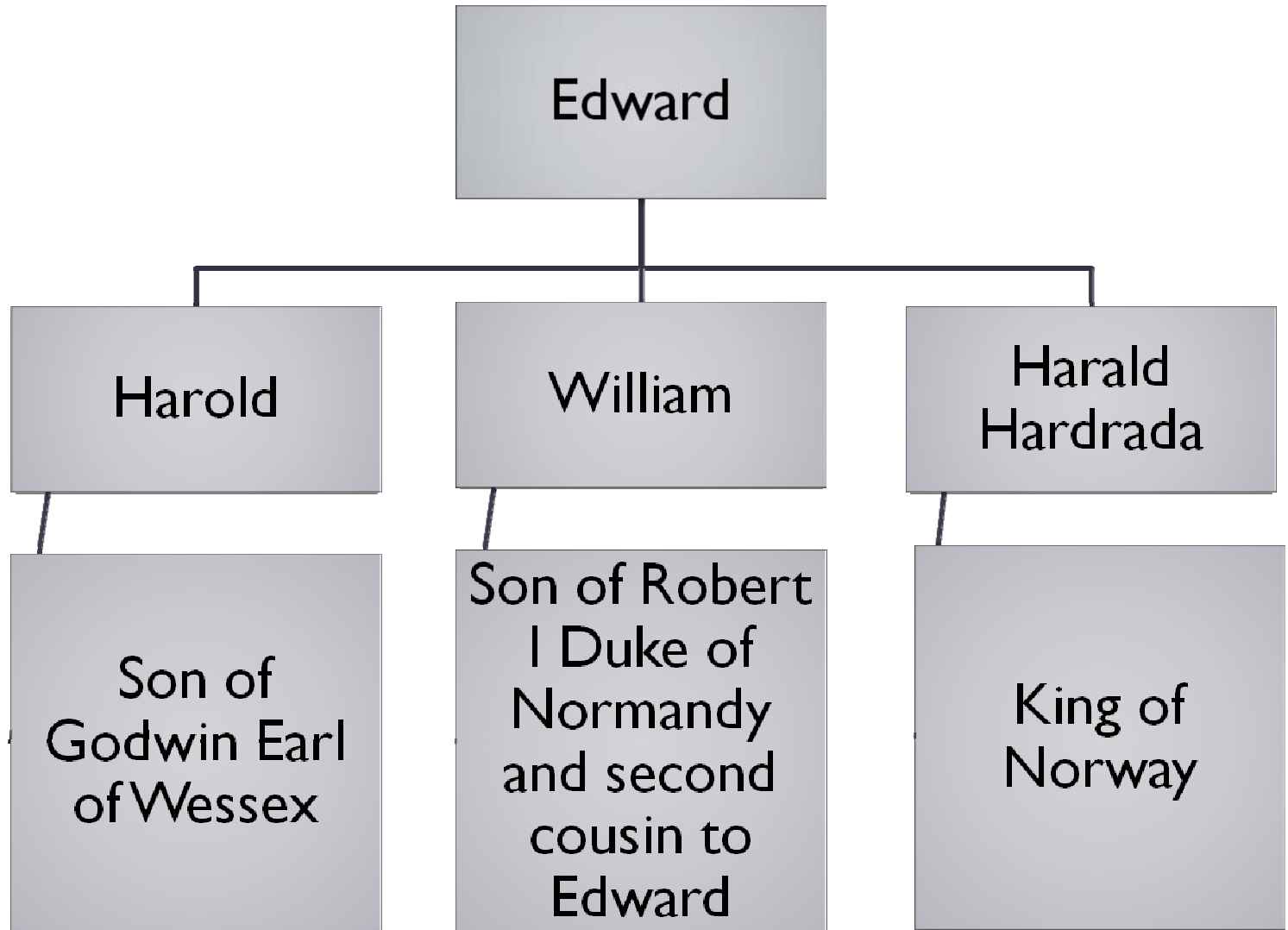
Pre - 1066

- 912
 - Scandinavian Northmen gained the right to occupy the Normandy.
 - Rollo their leader accepted the French King as his overlord and became the first Duke of Normandy.
- 1002
 - Æthelred the Unready King of England was driven into exile by the Danes and fled to Normandy.
 - His son Edward was born in France and thus received a French education.
- 1042
 - When the Danish line died out, Edward was restored to the English throne.

A.D. 1066

- King Edward died on the “eve of Twelfth day” (6th of Jan.) childless.
- The same day King Harold was crowned the new king; he was the son of Godwin Earl of Wessex and had been the principal advisor of Edward.
- Harold sent a fleet against William, Duke of Normandy. (William had plans to invade England to claim his right to the English Throne)

Who wanted to claim the English throne



Bayeux Tapestry

Harold the new king



A.D. 1066

Meanwhile Earl Tosty or Tostig (Brother of Harold), who had previously been banished from the land, invaded Harold's kingdom. He sailed into the Humber with 60 ships, but was defeated by Edwin Earl of Mercia.



A.D. 1066

- Tosty fled to Scotland and allied himself with Harald [Hadrada], King of Norway, who also claimed the English throne.
- Again he led his forces, together with Harald, into the Humber and fought against Morcar Earl of Northumbria and Edwin Earl of Mercia in York. This time he was victorious.

A.D. 1066

- Harold led his troops against Tosty and Harald and killed them in the battle at Stanfordbridge.
- William, Duke of Normandy, landed at Hastings on St. Michael's Day (29th of September).
- Harold led his troops back from York to Hastings to fight William.

A.D. 1066

- King Harold died during the Battle of Hastings. Legends say he was hit by an arrow when he took off his helmet.
- After some further skirmishes William claimed the throne of England and was crowned in Westminster on Christmas.



A.D. 1066

- Leofric was given the abbacy of Burton, Cortney, Crowland and Thorny by William.
- He survived when William took the throne by accepting him as the new ruler and by paying tribute to William.
- Leofric, abbot of Peterborough, died on “All-hallows-mass-night” (Halloween).

A.D. 1066

- After Leofric's death Brand became the new abbot, and people wanted him to be king. He was sent to Edgar Ætheling and received his blessing.
- William reacted aggressively to the news, but he was reconciled by a tribute of 40 marks of gold given to him by Brand and some nobles.
- Brand only lived for three more years.

A.D. 1070

- King Sweyne from Denmark sailed into the Humber, and allied himself with his landsmen and some Englishmen.
- Peterborough was plundered and the booty was brought to Ely.
- Thorold, a French abbot, became the new abbot of Peterborough.

A.D. 1070

- Thorold arrived at Peterborough with 160 armed French soldiers, but too late.
- Swayne left England but a great many of his ships were destroyed in a storm together with the stolen treasures.
- William offered Swayne a tribute to abandon Edgar Ætheling, and Swayne accepted.

Some facts about William I of England

- Father: Robert I, Duke of Normandy
- Mother: Herleva, daughter of a tanner
- William was the illegitimate and only son of Robert I
- He is referred to as
 - William the Conqueror
 - William the Bastard
- Through his great aunt Emma, mother of Edward, he had a claim to the English throne
- Edward also had promised him the English throne during his time in Normandy



Appearance of the French language in England

- Edward was raised in France so when he claimed the throne in 1042 he put some of his Norman friends into important positions
- This added a strong French atmosphere to the English court.

Appearance of the French language in England

- When William claimed the throne he introduced the new French nobility because many of the English upper class had been killed or had fled.
- The empty places were filled by William's followers, who were French. This led to a replacement of the English nobility.

Appearance of the French language in England

- Not only the nobility but also the clergy was replaced.
- 1075: 13 out of 21 abbots were English
- 1087: 3 out of 21 abbots were English
- For about 200 years French remained “the language” of the upper class in England.
- Since English was the language of the large lower class, French nobles had to learn at least bits of English to communicate; a certain mixture of the two languages became inevitable.



Linguistic impact of the Norman Conquest

- "Norsification" had taken place mostly in the Northern parts of the area we have dealt with in this course so far (from East Anglia to the borders of Scotland)
- another "language" (Norman French) was brought to England by the Normans, used mostly by the new Anglo-Norman elite



Linguistic impact of the Norman Conquest

- possibly through creolization, but more likely because of borrowing, there occurred a mixing of “the language”, which had been spoken in the Anglo-Saxon parts of Britain before William the Conqueror came, with Norman French

Linguistic impact of the Norman Conquest

- because the “local” rulers, the new “mixture” of Norse, Angles and Saxons, did not accept the new language entirely, the Norman language did not influence the 'older' linguistic system dramatically (cf. Text Number 7)
- “Central French” influenced English long after William the Conqueror; it was not influenced by Norman French extensively

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