

# Peacemaking after Defeat in England in 991 and Northern Song China in 1005

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This article uses a global history framework to compare peacemaking at the turn of the eleventh century between the English and the Vikings with that of the Northern Song and Kitan Liao dynasties in China. The article investigates the factors which shaped peacemaking after the English and the Northern Song dynasty suffered defeats, and the political influences which led to the decision to pay tribute to the Vikings and the Liao Empire respectively. The strategies of chief councillor Kou Zhun (1004-1006 CE) in advising Song Zhenzong (997-1022) provide a point of reference to identify salient points for further investigation on the English side. The Chinese data highlights the importance of religiously sanctioned letters, the nature of political scapegoating, and the cultural and tactical advantages enjoyed by the Liao Empire in the negotiations. A more extensive discussion follows on the English side with detailed investigation of annals to show how the peace agreement after the Battle of Maldon was re-evaluated between c. 1000 and c. 1020, and how Sigeric, archbishop of Canterbury (990-94), became a political scapegoat for tribute payments to the Vikings during the reign of Æthelred II, king of the English (978-1016). Ecclesiastical letters and lists of authority are then used to understand the political stance and strategy of Sigeric, linked to discussion of diplomatic missions between the papacy, England and Normandy. The article adopts a comparative approach to take fuller account of the influences upon advisers and domestic politics in explaining the issues at stake in peacemaking after the English and Northern Song were defeated by those they regarded as »barbarians«, and shows how global history can be used to deepen understanding of the factors at work in peacemaking in different regions of Asia and Europe.

*Keywords:* Chanyuan, Covenant of; China; England; Kou Zhun chief councillor; Kitans; Liao Empire; Maldon, Battle of; Sigeric, archbishop of Canterbury; tribute; Vikings

A global history approach offers an opportunity to assess the factors which shaped the peace agreement after the Battle of Maldon in 991 and the Chanyuan Covenant in 1005, following the raids of Vikings and the Kitan Liao deep into the English kingdom and the Northern Song empire respectively. It is important to begin by assessing the model, firstly, because it will provide context, and, secondly, because we need to identify the advantages which follow from micro as well as macro perspectives. Sebastian Conrad set out three subtypes of global history:<sup>1</sup>

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1 Conrad, *What is Global History?*, 3-11; see also Belich *et al.*, Introduction: Prospect of Global History.

1. surveys of the past encompassing everything from the history of humankind to themes such as empires, kingship, commodities etc.
2. understanding of exchanges and connections dealing with mobility and interaction, which demonstrate different phases of interconnectedness and integration.
3. the use of global transformations to provide contexts for understanding local and national challenges which typically are placed in national contexts.

This model is not necessarily better than any other,<sup>2</sup> but it provides an alternative to regional (typically »Eurocentric«) and national perspectives for analysing the history of medieval England or middle-period China in a comparative framework. In the interests of full disclosure, the present writer and Dominic Goodall used the methods adopted in this article to compare the strategies of ninth-century rulers in the Mercian kingdom and »Khmer Empire« in the granting of fiscal privileges of immunity to monasteries in charters and inscriptions.<sup>3</sup> Conrad suggests the third approach offers the greatest potential because it enables historians to analyse how distinctive local trajectories fit within a global context. This article combines the first and third subtypes.

Victor Lieberman's *Strange Parallels: Southeast Asia in Global Perspective* and Jonathan Scott's *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the State* address the theme of state formation in Asia and Europe by contrasting charter (Lieberman) and sedentary (Scott) states, whose elites controlled ceremonial centres, capital cultures, systems of taxation and cereal-based systems of agriculture, with the organisation of nomadic peoples and societies dependent upon pastoralism and various forms of hunter-gatherer exploitation.<sup>4</sup> They argue that consolidation and periodic contraction of charter/sedentary states arose from the intersection of ecological, environmental and epidemic factors with the threats posed by the raids, invasions and other activities of »barbarians«, the Mongols and other mobile non-state peoples.<sup>5</sup> Both challenge fiscal state historians (who view fiscal growth as the »*prime mobile* for the development of the state«),<sup>6</sup> and the literature on the collapse of the states,<sup>7</sup> and each has its

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- 2 For a reign-based comparison of rulership and Vikings in England, see Keynes, *Tale of two kings*.
  - 3 Goodall and Wareham, *Gifts of Power*. For comparisons of kinship structures in late tenth- and early eleventh-century England and China, see Wareham, *Transformation of kinship*.
  - 4 Scott, *Against the Grain*; Lieberman, *Strange Parallels* Vols. 1-2; for the historical geography approach, see Bates, *Prosperity and Violence*.
  - 5 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels* 1, 43-67, 236-41; 2, 184-192, 212-217; Scott, *Against the Grain*, 93-106, 183-256.
  - 6 For global perspectives, see Yun-Casalilla *et al.* (eds.), *Rise of Fiscal States*; Bonney, *Limits of Absolutism*, ix (quotation). For discussion of revenue and taxation systems in early eleventh-century England and Northern and Southern Song China (1127-1279), see Wareham, *Fiscal Policies*, and Liu, *Making of a Fiscal State* respectively. Liu argues for the sustainability of the Northern Song fiscal regime. Tribute did not have a detrimental impact upon the Song revenue system and its economy, but it did lead to tax evasion and pressures to undertake administrative reform (Kuhn, *Die Song Dynastie*, 89-90.) The present writer suggests the English experiment was not sustainable because of a weak institutional framework. Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon World*, 345 estimate that 55 percent of newly-issued English coins between 1012 and 1014 went into the pockets of the Vikings either to be buried, lost or taken back to Scandinavia.
  - 7 There is a substantial literature on the environment and the state in China. For key themes, see Elvin, *Retreat of the Elephants*, 87-128; and on the state's role in an environmental crisis, see Zhang, *River, Plain and State*.

distinctive arguments. Scott argues that the barbarians posed the greatest threat to sedentary states,<sup>8</sup> and Lieberman argues that the rimlands of Europe and Asia were protected by geographical and environmental advantages, and benefited from progressively shorter periods of disruption than states in exposed zones lying in between.<sup>9</sup> But, the general similarities between Scott's and Lieberman's work open up perspectives by which to compare and contrast some of the problems that states faced in their dealings with non-charter/sedentary states and societies. Lieberman's and Scott's works provide a general model from which to examine politics around peacemaking in a comparative framework.

In addition to the similarities in conclusions, Lieberman's and Scott's books share a key methodological feature. Because of their focus upon identification of global transitions, the archaeological and historical data is set out in a flat analysis without engagement with historiographical debates from national/regional contexts and/or difficulties with primary sources. For example, Scott conceptualises the era between the eighth and eleventh centuries as an era of Viking barbarian sea-borne invasions.<sup>10</sup> There is much additional evidence to support the view that the Vikings and the Rus reached high points of expansion in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries during a phase of favourable climatic conditions for long-distance trade and settlement, as well as raids.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the richness of the archaeological data demonstrates the role of the Rus in the trading and international exchange of commodities such as silk, linking China to Europe and Britain, in line with Conrad's second subtype of global history.<sup>12</sup> But, transformation identified by Scott as arising from Viking sea-borne invasions should also be understood as being connected to the roles played by Khazar trade networks and relationships between exchange and elite demand linking Europe with the Mediterranean.<sup>13</sup> As regards protected rimlands, there is a synchronicity between many processes of state formation, but questions arise over whether ideas and systems were pushed into the periphery as new ideas took shape in the core, rather than because of special features of the former.<sup>14</sup>

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8 Scott, *Against the Grain*, 222-227.

9 For a summary, see Lieberman, Protected rimlands.

10 Scott, *Against the Grain*, 254-255.

11 E.g. Bolton, *Empire of Cnut*; Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of the Rus*, 139-244. On medieval warming period data, see Helama *et al.*, Summer temperature variations; Stuiver *et al.*, GISP2 δ18O Climate Record; and for a general survey, see Lamb, *Climate, History*, 171-182. On ship design and exploitation of environment, see Bill, Viking Age Ships; for the transformation of Vikings and Rus into other identities and diasporas (i.e. *Normanni* from Vikings to Normans), see Skiba *et al.*, *Norman Connections*.

12 For the consumption of silk in England, the burgeoning of markets in the Low Countries, and production and uses in Northern Song China, see respectively, Fleming, Acquiring, flaunting and destroying silk; Ablaster, *History of the Low Countries*, 36, 59; Kuhn, *Die Song-Dynastie*, 128-129, 145, 166, 172, 184, 326-330, 381-392. For a map, see Hedenstierna-Jonson, Farmer, raider, 57 (map 5). For China and Silk Roads in a general context, see Jarman, *River Kings*, 172-173.

13 Franklin and Shepard, *Emergence of the Rus*, 71-180; Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages*, 693-824. It is important to observe that Scott's model of barbarian raids and interactions differs from nineteenth- and twentieth-century views of Vikings as agents of destruction in Europe, with the former emphasising the ways in which a range of interconnections and trade, as well as raids, led to transitions rather than the collapse of states/empires.

14 Those with a South Asian or Irish background who have studied Irish or Sanskrit, respectively, will be aware of closer connections between Irish and Sanskrit than between English and Sanskrit. For an introductory survey of Sanskrit, see Pollock, *Language of the Gods*.

At a general level this article concords with the views of Lieberman and Scott, but differs by undertaking more detailed investigation of primary sources and engaging with historiographical debates.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, whether England and China were on similar trajectories of patterns of war and peace, or the degrees to which these states concurred with charter/sedentary state models lies beyond our scope.<sup>16</sup> Rather, our concern is to look at the micro level, comparing two peace treaties, which have been chosen, firstly, because they are close in chronology, and, secondly, because the historical sources are broadly comparable, albeit with some divergences. Our focus for the Northern Song materials is upon the tripartite, religiously sanctioned oath letters setting out the terms of the Chanyuan Covenant and chronicles written in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries.<sup>17</sup> For the English material, we will draw not only upon letters relating to diplomacy and politics, but also upon contemporary annals, charters and lists of authority.<sup>18</sup> At a general level, the Maldon and Chanyuan agreements set into motion policies which committed English and Chinese rulers to pay substantial sums as tribute to the Vikings and Kitan Liao respectively, and were soon regarded as political errors in strategy,<sup>19</sup> although they were less damaging to the English and Song economies than might be assumed.<sup>20</sup> Broadly speaking, the Northern Song Empire (960-1127) lay between the Yellow River and the borders of Vietnam and Yunnan, and the Kitan Empire (907-1125) lay to its north, based in south-east Mongolia. The Kitan khanate was established in 907, and in 947 the dynasty changed its name to the Liao and then the Greater Liao.<sup>21</sup> Part I of this article looks at the dynamics of Song-Liao relations and the role of chief councillor Kou Zhun (1004-1006) in advising Song Zhenzong (997-1022). Parts II to IV consider changes in evaluations of the peace agreement after Maldon between c. 1000 and c. 1020, and the influences on and political initiatives of Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury (990-94), who provided advice for the tribute strategy during the reign of Æthelred II the »unready« or »ill-advised« (*unrædas*) (978-1016).<sup>22</sup>

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15 Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty*, xii, 107, 149 drew upon Prof. Jinty Nelson's work on ninth-century annals, and chronicles and sagas.

16 For example, in the tenth century, both England and Northern Song China expanded from small state units (Wessex and Later Zhou respectively) to create unified states with new systems of administration, which separated them from their predecessors and with significant links to the English and Chinese states in the medieval/middle and modern periods. But caveats are also required. The Northern Song looked back to the Tang Empire as well as the Later Zhou, whereas Wessex was only one kingdom in a »heptarchy« of early English kingdoms. That said, the Five Dynasty and Ten Kingdoms period (907-960) compares with struggles for power during the era of the »heptarchy«.

17 On letters, see below, n. 48.

18 Below, sections Peace-making and its Evaluation and Influences upon Archbishop Sigeric.

19 Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 92 citing Fu Pi (1004-1083) in the 1040s; *ASC MS C*, ed. O'Keeffe, 86, compiled in the 1020s, with further discussion in section Peace-making and its Evaluation.

20 Campbell, England c. 991, 3-4; Wareham, Fiscal policies, 921-922; Lau and Huang, Founding and consolidation, 268; Zhang, *River, Plain and State*, 84.

21 In 983 the name was changed back to Kitan, but in 1066 there was reversion to Liao.

22 For discussions of politics, see Abels, Æthelred, 61-67, 85-86; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 174-176, 182-193, 211-213, 229-230; Williams, Æthelred, 22-30, 69-70, 111-113. For the preference for »ill-advised« over »unready«, see Fletcher, *Bloodfeud*, 64; Williams, Æthelred, 19.

### *The War of 1004-1005 and the Chanyuan Covenant*

Lorge argues that »there was no ›China‹ without war«, and that military strategy at »an immense cost in blood« built and maintained the pre-modern Chinese state, rather than the precociousness of its civil bureaucracy, or the strength of its market economies, and consequently that conquests and defeats stemmed from dynasties' failures in military strategy.<sup>23</sup> We will test this argument in relation to the conflict over the Sixteen Prefectures (in which modern Beijing lies) in north-east China. By 979 the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127) had succeeded in reconquering much of the territory formerly ruled over by the Tang dynasty (618-907),<sup>24</sup> but a notable exception was the Sixteen Prefectures south of the Great Wall, covering around 84,000 km<sup>2</sup>. The territory was of strategic importance to both sides because it controlled a corridor between China and the steppe,<sup>25</sup> and additionally to the Kitan Liao because of the location of its Southern Capital there and its agricultural wealth.<sup>26</sup> The Sixteen Prefectures were a source of conflict between Chinese and Kitan dynasties for 67 years, until the Chanyuan Covenant in 1005 heralded a peace of 117 years.

In 938 the Sixteen Prefectures were ceded to the Kitans in return for military assistance by the Later Jin dynasty (936-947).<sup>27</sup> However, after improvements in waterways and embankments on the southern side of the border, the area known as Guannan (approximately congruent with Hebei), comprising two prefectures and three passes, was conquered from the Liao in 959 by the Later Zhou dynasty (951-960).<sup>28</sup> Song efforts to continue with the conquest (from a Song perspective, a reconquest) in 979 and 986-988 met with failure.<sup>29</sup> Song Zhenzong had no experience of war and had not held a senior administrative role before becoming emperor,<sup>30</sup> but in 1000 he accepted advice to extend the waterway network westwards along the Song-Liao border and to invest in the construction of water fields to prevent the advance of the Kitan cavalry.<sup>31</sup> From a Song viewpoint, this represented fulfilment of a long-term objective to improve defences, but for the Liao it was reminiscent of the prelude to the 959 conquest of Guannan under the military command of Zhao Guangyin (928-976), who used this victory to seize power and to found the Northern Song dynasty.<sup>32</sup> At this time the Liao dowager empress Cheng T'ien and her son Liao Shengzong (982-1031) responded with four raids upon Guannan between 999 and 1003, with the raid of 1001 being led by

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23 Lorge, *War, Politics and Society*, esp. 1-17, 139-57 (quotations at 13, 178). For reservations on the civil reforms of the Northern Song, see *ibid.*, 33; cf. Kuhn, *Age of Confucian Rule*; Liu, *Chinese Market Economy*.

24 The intervening five dynasties are as follows: Later Liang (907-923), Later Tang (923-936), Later Jin (936-947), Later Han (947-951) and Later Zhou (951-960).

25 For a map, see Marsone, *La steppe et L'empire*, 162 (Carte des Seize prefectures).

26 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 14; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 46.

27 Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 42.

28 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 98-101; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 46-47.

29 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 193-194, 212-225; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 44-45.

30 Lau and Huang, *Founding and consolidation*, 260.

31 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 242-245; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 48-49.

32 On the aftermath of Gaoping and its role in the Northern Song coup, see Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 53-54.

Shengzong himself.<sup>33</sup> Song forces responded vigorously, driving home to the Liao the tactical need for deep-penetrating attacks,<sup>34</sup> and in September 1004 the Liao launched a major invasion of the eastern part of Guannan, deploying a force of 200,000 Kitan cavalry on 24th October.<sup>35</sup> In 1004 Kou Zhun (961-1023) succeeded Li Hang (947-1004) as Song chief councillor, and he provided Zhenzong with the advice to advance to Chanyuan in the war zone, around 100 km north-east of the Song capital at Kaifeng.<sup>36</sup> In advocating this policy, he faced opposition from Wang Qinruo (926-1025), who argued that the emperor should seek safety around 900 km south-west of Kaifeng.<sup>37</sup> Kou Zhun drove home his argument:

Your advisers are cowardly and timid. They talk ignorantly, no different from the farmers and the old women. The invaders are now nearby and danger surrounds us. Your majesty can advance a foot but not retreat an inch. Those who have devised such plans for your majesty should be condemned and beheaded [...] How could we wish to abandon our ancestral temples and our altars to the spirit of the land and go as far as away as Ch'u (Kiangnan) or Shu (Szeschwan).<sup>38</sup>

The arrival of Zhenzong at Chanyuan on 9th January 1005 strengthened Song resolve, and paved the way for peace negotiations.<sup>39</sup>

The Chanyuan Covenant, agreed to on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1005 and proclaimed on 5th February, set out in religiously sanctioned letters issued by each side, resulted in Song recognition of the Liao Empire, demilitarised the border along the Juma river, and recognised the mutual sovereignty of the Liao over the Sixteen Prefectures and of the Song over Guannan.<sup>40</sup> In addition, the Song agreed to pay »annual military assistance payments« of 200,000 bolts of raw silk and 100,000 taels of silver to the Liao Empire.<sup>41</sup> Kou Zhun was viewed as the architect of the agreement and acquired considerable political capital.<sup>42</sup> But, by 1006 problems with the treaty were already apparent, in terms of the damage to Song status and morale, and Kou Zhun was demoted from chief councillor to governor of T'ien-hsiung in the Guannan area,<sup>43</sup> though the fortunes of the chief negotiator, Cao Liyong (971-1029), continued to prosper until the death of Song Zhenzong in 1022.<sup>44</sup> The advance of Kitan forces to within striking

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33 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 247-262; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 46-47.

34 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 257.

35 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 262-264, 268; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 47, 50-55 (at 253 for 200,000 Kitan cavalry citing Lau, *Making war for peace?*, 180).

36 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 264-267; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 55-56, 59-60.

37 Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 56-57.

38 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 267; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 57 (citation and trans. of Li Tao, *Xu Zishi Tongjian Changbian*).

39 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 268; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 62-64.

40 For texts and discussion of letters, see Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 54, 74-76.

41 Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 74-76. This payment remained in place until 1042, when as a result of the war between the Song with the Hsia, the military assistance to the Liao was increased by a further 100,000 bolts of silk and 100,000 ounces of silver (Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 217).

42 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 30, 276.

43 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 30; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 88.

44 Ji, *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China*, 29-30.

distance of Kaifeng and the terms of the covenant can make it seem that they had defeated the Song,<sup>45</sup> but heavy casualties meant that they also wished to come to the negotiating table.<sup>46</sup> Audits of war, though, provide only a partial explanation for the Song handling of the crisis, and historians have given much emphasis to Song perceptions of their own status as a dynasty and perceptions of the Kitans.

A twelfth-century history of the Northern Song dynasty depicted the Kitans as barbarians,<sup>47</sup> and this view was compounded by the Song dynasty's own insecurity.<sup>48</sup> It fostered the mistaken belief that the Liao aimed to destroy the Song,<sup>49</sup> but the Liao were aware of Song society and institutions and also had an understanding of Song objectives.<sup>50</sup> In 1004-1005 the Liao wanted to bring the Song to the negotiating table, and their raids were undertaken to achieve this objective.<sup>51</sup> Naomi Standen suggested that ethnicity did not act as a barrier for those wishing to take up service at the Liao court,<sup>52</sup> and the Liao chief negotiator was a former senior Song official.<sup>53</sup> In addition to these tactical advantages, political and cultural factors may also have been at work. Among Northern Song ideas was the concept that to cede land signalled political subservience, and the concession of Guannan would therefore have indicated weakness.<sup>54</sup> But the Liao approach was more flexible,<sup>55</sup> and a willingness to concede Guannan provided an opportunity to negotiate significant gains in other areas, notably in securing full political recognition and annual tribute payments, as well as sovereignty over the Sixteen Prefectures. David Wright sums up the situation well: »It is difficult for me to regard the conclusion of the Covenant of Chanyuan as anything but a significant victory for the Liao«,<sup>56</sup> which arose from a combination of factors within the negotiating process, as well as the Liao military advances.

The strategy of Song Zhenzong lends support to Lorge's view on the centrality of military affairs in the making of the Chinese state, but failure lay as much in the peace negotiations as in the strategy of war. We can speculate to what degree Song insecurity and reservations over the Liao as »barbarians« played a role in the decision to concede annual military assistance payments, presented as tribute from the Liao perspective. Similarly, how much benefit derived from tactical advantages accruing to the Liao in terms of greater knowledge of opponents' objectives is hard to quantify. More concretely, we can take notice of two outcomes. Firstly, the architect (Kou Zhun) of the Chanyuan Covenant was blamed for the failings, and secondly, in order to move attention away from it, Song Zhenzong fabricated the dispatch

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45 Zhang, *River, Plain and the State*, 58.

46 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 19, 271-272.

47 Ji, *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China*, 134; Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 14 (citation and trans. of Li Tao, *Xu Zishi Tongjian Changbian*).

48 Zhang, *River, Plain and State*, 53-57.

49 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 18; Lorge, *War, Politics and Society*, 47.

50 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 19; Twitchett and Tietze, *Liao*, 87-98.

51 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 16-18; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 84-85.

52 Standen, *Unbounded Loyalty*, 26-32.

53 Schwarz-Schilling, *Treaty of Shanyuan*, 12-14; cf. Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 60-62.

54 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 19, 268.

55 Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 271-272; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 71, 83.

56 Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 94.

of a divine text and held a religious ceremony at Mount Tai to »subdue the entire nation and show off to foreign states«. <sup>57</sup> Investment in sacral power after defeat in negotiations provided new political capital. The demotion of Kou Zhun sent out a political message, but the need to maintain stable diplomatic ties may explain Cao Liyong's retention of office. In this reading, defeat lay at the negotiating table as well as in war, perhaps causing a particular sense of humiliation, which required investment in sacred festivals and rituals emphasising overlordship. <sup>58</sup>

### *Peacemaking and its Evaluation after the Battle of Maldon*

In 991 a Viking force established a camp on Northey Island, opposite the *burh* of Maldon, with the force having access to the resources on the Blackwater estuary to support itself. <sup>59</sup> It remained there until the arrival of an English army led by Ealdorman Byrhtnoth of Essex, <sup>60</sup> precipitating the Battle of Maldon on 10th or 11th August. The Vikings killed Byrhtnoth, defeated his army, and took possession of the battlefield. <sup>61</sup> It was a major defeat of the English, but it did not mark a collapse of the English state. <sup>62</sup> The most evocative source is the poem, *The Battle of Maldon*, written in the early eleventh century to commemorate the death of Byrhtnoth and his companions, <sup>63</sup> but it is the so-called »Anglo-Saxon Chronicle«, better referred to as the *Old English Royal Annals*, which describes and evaluates the defeat and peace agreement in two extant versions. <sup>64</sup> The A version's account was written at Winchester from the court of King Alfred »the great« (870-899), but it was moved to Canterbury in 1006. <sup>65</sup> The entry for 991 on Maldon was written c. 1000x1006, and no later than 1006. <sup>66</sup> The source for the accounts in the C, D and E versions, covering the period between c. 983 and c. 1023, were written up in the early 1020s, with minimal differences between each version. <sup>67</sup> Research has advanced significantly in the last few decades, due mainly to the publication of a collaborative series, <sup>68</sup> and we will restrict ourselves to two observations. Hindsight enabled

57 Zhu, *Festivals*, 729.

58 For the role of the Chanyuan Covenant in the Bow and Arrow martial arts society, see Wang and Cai, *Entertainment and sports*, 468-467.

59 On Viking leaders, see Keynes, *Historical context*, 90; Roach, *Æthelred*, 117-122; Scragg, *Return of the Vikings*, 65-69, 74-75; cf. Abels, *Æthelred*, 113 n. 4; Howard, *Sweyn Forkbeard's Invasions*, 36. On the Blackwater estuary, see Mirrington, *Transformations of Identity*, 168-169.

60 On Byrhtnoth as the second most senior ealdorman c. 983-989, see Keynes, *Diplomas*, table 6.

61 *ASC MS. A*, ed. Bately, 79.

62 On the battle and its sources, see *Battle of Maldon*, ed. Scragg; Scragg, *Return of the Vikings*; see also Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's invasions*, 35-37; Lavelle, *Æthelred*, 66-67; Roach, *Æthelred*, 117-121.

63 *Battle of Maldon*; on dating and as a historical source, see Scragg, *Battle of Maldon: fact or fiction?*.

64 Brooks, 'Anglo-Saxon Chronicle(s)' or 'Old English Royal Annals'.

65 *ASC MS. A*, ed. Bately, xiv.

66 *ASC MS. A*, ed. Bately, 79 (Bately's »hand 5«); Scragg, *Return of the Vikings*, 56 dates it to around 1000.

67 Stafford, *After Alfred*, 175-176 (including discussion of 991 as the start date for this block of annals). For a list of major and minor differences between the C, D and E versions, see *ibid.*, 340-341. Neither category applies to 991, but there is a difference in the spelling of Byrhtnoth, rendered as Brihtnoð in the C and E versions, but as Byrihtnoð in D (see below, n. 95).

68 This has been undertaken under the general editorship of David Dumville and Simon Keynes.



the writer of the annals which were copied into the C, D and E versions to craft a narrative which explained the English defeat and the subsequent Danish conquest of England in terms of the poor counsel provided by the king's advisers and divisions within the English ranks.<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, a continued model of central annalistic production from the 890s with periodic dissemination from the royal household to monastic scriptoria accounts for the variations between the different versions, while connections between manuscripts and local centres of writing were less important than might be assumed.<sup>70</sup>

The A version provides an evaluation of the battle of Maldon and its aftermath within a decade of the battle, placing emphasis upon the role of Olaf Tryggvason, later king of Norway (995-1000).

In this year Olaf came with 93 ships to Folkestone, and ravaged round about it, and then from there went to Sandwich, and so from there to Ipswich, and overran it all, and so to Maldon. And Ealdorman Byrhtnoth came against him there with his army and fought against him; and they killed the ealdorman there and had control of the field. And afterwards peace was made between them and the king stood sponsor to him afterwards at his confirmation.<sup>71</sup>

The annal has a complex layout,<sup>72</sup> and the most likely explanation is that the entry above relates to 991 but that »the last sentence belongs to the year 994 when peace was made with Olaf«. <sup>73</sup> Consequently, we can regard the entry as a summation of the events in 991, which was viewed as having a connection with Æthelred II standing sponsor to Olaf at his confirmation in 994.<sup>74</sup> At this point in time there was no political scapegoat on the English side, and nor was the language of the annal dramatic in its depiction of the Viking raid, restricting itself to statements on ship numbers, the ravaging of four towns and the nature of the Viking victory.

The peace treaty *II Æthelred* provides further insight into the peace agreement.<sup>75</sup> It is traditionally dated to 991, but 994 is gaining greater authority.<sup>76</sup> The opening clause explained it was »according to the terms which Archbishop Sigeric, Ealdorman Æthelweard and Ealdorman Ælfric made, when they obtained permission from the king to purchase peace for the districts which they rule over, under the king«. <sup>77</sup> The problem stems from the inclusion

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69 On the context of the composition and impact of the source for the C, D and E versions, see Keynes, *Declining reputation*.

70 Brooks, *Why is the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle about kings?*, esp. 45, 53 emphasising the importance of common materials; cf. Higham and Ryan, *Anglo-Saxon Word*, 276, who summarise the alternative view. For discussion of where the source of the C, D and E versions emanated from, see Stafford, *After Alfred*, 177.

71 *ASC MS. A*, ed. Bately, 79, trans. Whitelock *et al.*, *ASC*, 82.

72 Bately, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 38-39, 43-44.

73 Scragg, *Return of the Vikings*, 56-57, 75 (quotation), 103, 179; *ASC*, trans. Whitelock *et al.*, 82 n. 3; cf. Bately, *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 43-44; *ASC MS. A*, ed. Bately, lix-lxii.

74 For further discussion on events at Andover and the suggestion that Ealdorman Æthelweard was involved in the 994 sponsorship, see Lavelle, *Law, death and peacemaking*, 126-129.

75 *II Æthelred*, ed. Liebermann; trans. Whitelock, 437-439.

76 Whitelock, *EHD*, 437; cf. Keynes, *Historical context*, 103-04; Lavelle, *Law, death and peacemaking*, 125-126.

77 *II Æthelred*, ed. Liebermann, 220; trans. Whitelock, 437-438. For discussion of the roles of Ealdormen Æthelweard and Ælfric, see Lavelle, *Law, death and peacemaking*, 127-129.

as the lead negotiator of Archbishop Sigeric, who died on 28th or 31st of October 994,<sup>78</sup> before the end of the 994 raid. If *II Æthelred* is to be dated to 994, it is significant that both it and the A version of the *Old English Royal Annals* draw upon data from earlier and later years respectively, in the case of the former referring to Archbishop Sigeric's role in the peace negotiations of 991, and in the latter linking the peace agreement in 991 to the royal sponsorship of Olaf in 994.<sup>79</sup> In short, when viewed from the perspective of c. 1000x1006, a link was perceived between peacemaking after the 991 and 994 raids in which the key to the peace was the transition of Olaf Tryggvason from Viking raider to friend of the English,<sup>80</sup> but by the early 1020s, the C (D & E) versions of the *Old English Royal Annals* provided a different assessment.

In this year Ipswich was ravaged, and very soon afterwards Ealdorman Byrhtnoth was killed at Maldon. And in that year it was determined that tribute should first be paid to the Danish men because of the great terror (*micel brōga*) they were causing along the coast. The first payment was 10,000 pounds. Archbishop Sigeric first advised that course.<sup>81</sup>

Here the focus is upon explaining the factors behind the decision to pay tribute, namely the killing of Ealdorman Byrhtnoth and the »great terror« along a coast of unspecified dimensions.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, Sigeric, archbishop of Canterbury (990-994), was blamed for a series of tributes paid to the Vikings beginning in 991 and ending in 1018, comprising 206,000 pounds at the national level and 13,500 pounds at the local level.<sup>83</sup> What had begun as a tribute in line with those paid to Vikings in the ninth century ended up with Kings Æthelred II

78 Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, 213-214.

79 It is likely that baptism and confirmation occurred close to each other, perhaps even on the same day. Separation of baptism and confirmation was connected to the rise of infant baptism in early medieval Europe, leading to the need for sponsors. But once established this framework of thought was applied to adults, even though they could vouch for themselves. Confirmation moved from strengthening "what was already there" to granting to those confirmed what they could not possess themselves before the sacrament. Hence there were liturgical reasons for recording confirmation of Olaf to cover both sacraments in the C (D and E) version of the *Old English Royal Annals* under 994 (ASC, trans. Whitelock et al., 83) rather than either baptism or baptism and confirmation. Thus, in 994 Æthelred II and Olaf would have been perceived to have created a bond with one another through their two roles as sponsor and candidate in the two sacraments. For further discussion of changes in Christian initiation and a diminishing emphasis upon baptism, see Cramer, *Baptism and Change*, 179-206 (quotation at 182); Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Baptism*, 1-30; Fisher, *Christian Initiation: Reformation*, 159-162.

80 For Olaf's role in the 994 raid and peace agreement, see Abels, *Æthelred*, 49-50; Brooks, *Early History*, 283; Lavelle, *Law, death and peacemaking*, 129. English tributes were used to establish his rule as king of Norway between 995 and 1000 (Bagge, *From Viking Stronghold to Christian Kingdom*, 37-31). This perhaps provided the context for the later tradition that in 1014 King Olaf helped King Æthelred II to expel the Danes from London (Sturluson, *The History of St Olav in: Sturluson, Heimskringla*, ed. Monsen and trans. Smith, 223-224).

81 *ASC MS. C*, ed. O'Keefe, 86; *ASC*, trans. Whitelock et al., 82; see also, *ASC MS. D*, ed. Cubbin, 48; *ASC MS. E*, ed. Irvine, 61.

82 *ASC MS C*, ed. O'Keefe, 86; *ASC*, trans. Whitelock et al., 82 (s.a. 991 C version). This can be linked to the language used in the contemporary poem *The Battle of Maldon*, which described the Vikings as »wolves of slaughter« (*wælwulfas*) and the Danes as a »hateful race«: in *Battle of Maldon*, ed. Scragg, 22, line 96; 20, line 90.

83 For data and a review of the debate on authenticity, see Wareham, *Fiscal Policies*, 916-919 (Table 1 at 919). This figure includes £21,000 paid as stipends (*heregeld*) in 1014.

and Cnut (1016-1035) raising more in taxation than most of their late medieval successors.<sup>84</sup> Criticism of Sigeric gained momentum in the Anglo-Norman period. A post-Conquest scribe added to the A version of the *Old English Royal Annals* entry for 991 that the peace was made »through the advice of Sigeric, bishop of the people of Kent, and of Ælfheah, bishop of Winchester«,<sup>85</sup> and Henry of Huntingdon wrote of the *consilium infaustum* of Sigeric.<sup>86</sup> But these views only began to take shape in the 1020s and did not reflect contemporary evaluation.<sup>87</sup> We can dig deeper to draw upon contemporary sources' descriptions of other aspects of the politics of the period and the role of Archbishop Sigeric, firstly, to explain his political stance, and secondly, how his concerns with domestic politics shaped his approaches to international diplomacy and the Vikings.

### *Influences upon Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury and Domestic Politics*

Sigeric became a monk at Glastonbury and received his monastic education under St Dunstan, abbot of Glastonbury (c. 943-988) and archbishop of Canterbury (959-988),<sup>88</sup> and of the six archbishops elected between 988 and 1035 who had formerly been monks, Sigeric had the strongest connections with Dunstan and Glastonbury.<sup>89</sup> Sigeric became abbot of St. Augustine's Canterbury in 980, bishop of Ramsbury in 985 and archbishop of Canterbury in 990.<sup>90</sup> There is no evidence for the view that he was made archbishop at an advanced age or that he had an extended period of ill health.<sup>91</sup> Nicholas Brooks argued that Sigeric was a poor adviser to King Æthelred II in dealing with the Vikings, and that his main achievements lay within church affairs.<sup>92</sup> This framework has served to understand Sigeric's role more generally, whether setting out the case for the effectiveness of King Æthelred II and the witan, taking a more critical view of the king and his advisers, or focusing upon the church and society in discussing the archbishops of Canterbury.<sup>93</sup> Five letters enable us to look at the influences upon Sigeric, the nature of the political challenges that he faced before Maldon, and the strategies which he used in domestic and international politics.

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84 Campbell, *England c. 991*, 160; cf. Gillingham, »Most precious jewel«, 375-378.

85 *ASC MS. A*, ed. Bately, 79 (Bately hand 7a), trans. Whitelock *et al.*, *ASC*, 82 n. 5. The scribe may have reflected upon some post-Conquest views of the role of Archbishop Sigeric at a local level as a result of the payment of tribute in 994; or perhaps, given the mention of Bishop Ælfheah, the intention was to highlight Sigeric's role in *II Æthelred*.

86 Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. Greenway, 326-328; see also *Chronicle of John of Worcester*, ed. Darlington *et al.*, 438.

87 Cf. above, pp. 116-117 n. 71-79.

88 Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, 212.

89 Mason, Sigeric; Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, 211-212, 214; Crick, *Charters of St Albans*, 18-21.

90 Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Christ Church*, 212; Mason, Sigeric.

91 Cf. Brooks, *Early History*, 279-280; Mason, Sigeric. Ælfheah was appointed as archbishop of Canterbury in 1005 at the age of around 53 (Rumble, *Winchester to Canterbury*, 168), and a similar age would fit for Sigeric's appointment.

92 Brooks, *Early History*, 278-283.

93 For a view emphasising Sigeric's skills and calibre, see Keynes, *Diplomas*, 189-190; Keynes, *Wulfstige*, 60; Roach, *Æthelred*, 137, 158; for a critical view, see Mount, *Everyday Life*, 48; for emphasis on his role in church affairs, see Mason, Sigeric.

Two letters of exhortation provide some insights on advice he received.<sup>94</sup> One, perhaps written by the secular clerk B., better known as the author of the *Vita Dunstani*, need not detain us too long.<sup>95</sup> Lavished with sycophantic praise for Sigeric, it requested that he should look after the interests of the secular clergy and maintain his reputation for incorruptibility.<sup>96</sup> Of much greater interest is the *Epistola Elfwerdi Abbatis ad Sigericum Archiepiscopum*, written by Ælfweard, abbot of Glastonbury (988-1009).<sup>97</sup> There are similarities with Alcuin's letter to Archbishop Æthelheard of Canterbury (793-805),<sup>98</sup> and it is worth testing the degree of the match to consider its value as a source for political history.

Alcuin had written to Archbishop Æthelheard in 793 during an era of Viking raids and at the time when King Offa of Mercia (757-796) was seeking to divide the archbishopric of Canterbury into two and to transfer authority to the new archbishopric of Lichfield.<sup>99</sup> The selection of the letter as a model suggests that events in 793, when the Vikings had launched a devastating attack on Lindisfarne as recorded in the *Old English Royal Annals*, applied to the situation in 990.<sup>100</sup> Viking raids had begun again in 980 with attacks on Cheshire and Thanet and continued through the 980s,<sup>101</sup> and it might be expected that this was the key factor in guiding the selection of this letter, but comparison shows that concerns over the threat to the church from royal power were reckoned to pose the greater threat. Both letters called upon the recipients to act as heralds of salvation, to be shepherds rather than hirelings, to have no fear of men who carried swords, and to remember the mystery of the cross in standing up for the rights of the Church.<sup>102</sup> But even within these passages there are significant differences: Ælfweard's comments are much more extensive and direct, using the personal form »you« to address Sigeric:

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94 For the text and translation of a letter from Odbert, abbot of St Bertin, to Sigeric, see Vanderputten, *Canterbury and Flanders*, 242-244.

95 *Epistola ad Sigericum*, ed. Stubbs, 399-400 (BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 164) uses a similar style and syntax to B's letter to Archbishop Æthelgar (*Epistola B. ad Æthelgarum*, ed. Stubbs, 385-388; cf. Lapidge, *Hermeneutic style*, 97. On B's life and work, see Winterbottom and Lapidge, *Introduction*, lxiv-lxxxviii).

96 For B's efforts to secure patronage, see Cubitt, *Archbishop Dunstan*, 148; Winterbottom and Lapidge, *Introduction*, lxxxvii-iii.

97 *Epistola Elfwerdi Abbatis ad Sigericum*, ed. Stubbs, 400-403 (BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 170r-172v); on Abbot Ælfweard, see Kelly, *Charters of Abingdon*, 178-179.

98 Alcuin, *Epistola* 17, ed. Dümmler, 45-49. For observations on similarities, see Brooks, *Early History*, 281; Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 212-213.

99 Brooks, *Early History*, 120-127; Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 197-198.

100 *EHD*, ed. Whitelock, 181 (s.a. 793 D and E versions).

101 Abels, *Æthelred*, 32-33; Keynes, *Historical Context*, 85-86; Lavelle, *Æthelred*, 51-54; Roach, *Æthelred*, 116; Williams, *Æthelred*, 43. For a discussion of charter evidence to suggest that raids began in the late 970s, see Insley, *Athelstan, charters and the English*, 21-23.

102 Alcuin, *Epistola* 17, ed. Dümmler, 45; *Epistola Elfwerdi Abbatis ad Sigericum*, ed. Stubbs, 401 (BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 170v-171r).

Why do you fear man on account of the sword? You received the key of the kingdom from Christ; remember that he died for you and you do not dare to speak out for Him. He, for love of you, having been pierced with nails, hung on the cross and if you [...] of your own dignity should keep silent on account of the fear of man, he knows, father, he knows; but just as he has loved, so love him also. The one who works more shall receive more reward. If [you punish] the erring ones, your reward is with the Lord and perfect salvation, even if [the sinner] will hate the one reprimanding.<sup>103</sup>

Ælfweard intensified Alcuin's message that anything that a prelate suffered on behalf of the faith was negligible when compared to the suffering of Christ on the cross, and added that the Lord would know if Sigeric kept silent in refusing to punish those who had erred. After discussing almsgiving and prayer, Ælfweard continued:

We have discovered one precious pearl, let us give away everything which we have and let us buy it. [...] Let not power and earthly fragility dismay, let not secular ambition restrain pontifical severity. Do not fear those who are able to destroy the body but are not able [to destroy] the spirit. Be unwilling to sell the doves of God, give that which you have freely received.<sup>104</sup>

The text on having no fear in protecting the church and needing to sacrifice everything is striking. The precious pearl (*pretiosa margarita*) drew attention both to the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:44-46) and the idea of protecting God's work (Genesis 1:1-14), and the doves of God (Luke 2: 24) seem to refer to the consecration of Jesus to God at his presentation at the Temple and by extension, Sigeric's consecration as a follower of Christ, priest and bishop.<sup>105</sup>

There are also important differences with no overlapping content between the letters. Alcuin's letter drew attention to Gildas's work on how the Britons, through their wickedness, had brought ruin upon themselves,<sup>106</sup> but Ælfweard was unconcerned with these lessons from history and analogies with the sins of the English people and their connection with Viking raids as a warning from God to reform. The omission of this stock explanation of the causes and remedies for the Viking raids meant that there was a sharper focus on the threat posed by secular power and the need to ensure unity within the church. On the latter, Ælfweard may have been keen to ensure that the problems with the anti-monastic reaction in the late 970s should be healed, and, thus, as regards the monastic reform programme suggested that Sigeric should limit his concerns to ensuring that the monks in his charge should dress and

103 *Epistola Elfwerdi Abbatis ad Sigericum*, ed. Stubbs, 401 (BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 170v-171r): *Quid times hominem propter glad(ium) (cla)vem regni accepisti a Christo; recordare quia passus est pro te et non metuas loqui pro Illo. Illo pro tuo amore clavis confixus pependit in cruce et tu si [...] dignitatis tuae ob timorem hominis tacueris [...] novit, pater, novit; sed, sicut Ille dilexit, ita dilige et Illum. Qui plus laborat plus mercedis accipiet. Si [corrigis] deliquentes, tibi est merces apud Dominum et summa salus [peccator] odieret increpantem.*

104 *Epistola Elfwerdi Abbatis ad Sigericum*, ed. Stubbs, 402 (BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 171r): *Invenimus unam pretiosam margaritam, demus omnia quae habemus et emamus illam. [...] Non terrena fragilitatis terreat potestas, non saecularis ambitio pontificalem severitatem compescat. Noli timere eos qui corpus possunt occidere, animam autem non possent [repetition of occidere implied]. Noli columbas vendere Dei; da quod gratis accepisti.*

105 It is important to distinguish the doves from the dove of God. The latter has different meanings in Genesis 8:11, Matthew 3:16 (see also Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; John 1:32), and Matthew 10:16.

106 Alcuin, *Epistola* 17, ed. Dümmler, 47.

eat with moderation,<sup>107</sup> but he made no call upon Sigeric to reconstitute the monastic community at Canterbury as a Benedictine house in line with the tenth-century reform movement. The letters of Alcuin and Ælfweard to Archbishops Æthelheard and Sigeric shared some common ground in part because of the applicability of the circumstances in 793 to events in 990, but there are important differences. Alcuin's letter covered a broad number of themes, including the need to stand up to secular power, but this was not the central theme of his letter. The clear message from Ælfweard was that Sigeric had to take up the duty of defending the English church, and that carrying forward expulsion of secular clerks from Canterbury should not be a priority. Sigeric placed monastic life on a firm footing at Canterbury,<sup>108</sup> but did not bring Canterbury into line with the progress of monastic reform at Winchester,<sup>109</sup> and it would not be until 1002 that Canterbury would be reformed by replacing secular clerks with monks.<sup>110</sup> Ælfweard's letter of advice (and perhaps also B's request to look after the interests of the secular clergy) may have played a role in persuading Sigeric to avoid this course of action in order to focus his attention upon the threat posed by secular power, and to move attention away from a general diagnosis of the poor moral standards acting as a cause of God's judgment as expressed through the Viking raids.

A third letter, namely an exhortation letter written to St Wulfsgie, bishop of Sherborne (c. 993-1002), by an archbishop of Canterbury, whose personal name is no longer visible, provides insight into how this message was communicated.<sup>111</sup> This letter was written either by Sigeric c. 993, or by Ælfric c. 995.<sup>112</sup> Sigeric and Wulfsgie had been monks at Glastonbury and both had further links with Dunstan via Canterbury and Westminster respectively,<sup>113</sup> but there was no such connection between Ælfric and Wulfsgie. The letter has connections with Alcuin's letter to Eanbald II, archbishop of York (fl. 796-803).<sup>114</sup> The first and second parts were taken from Alcuin's letter, setting aside some minor variations in organisation of the materials and Alcuin's reflections upon old age.<sup>115</sup> But these sections only make up around a quarter of Alcuin's letter, which goes on to explore a range of other themes mainly to do with Eanbald's duties towards the secular clergy.<sup>116</sup> However, the final part of the letter to Wulfsgie set out the need to admonish an ealdorman (*dux*) and all secular rulers (*omnes saeculares principes*) to ensure that they were pure in heart in following God.<sup>117</sup> The ealdorman

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107 *Epistola Elfwerdi Abbatis ad Sigericum*, ed. Stubbs, 403.

108 Brooks, *Early History*, 277-278.

109 Yorke, Introduction, 3-6.

110 S 914; Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 1019-1034.

111 *Epistola*, 41, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, 226-229.

112 For *periculosus et laboriosissimis temporibus* (*Epistola*, 41, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, 228) referring to 995, see Hill, Wulfsgie, 149-150; Keynes, Wulfsgie, 63. It could equally refer to 991.

113 Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 212; Hill, Wulfsgie, 48-49; Keynes, Wulfsgie, 55-58.

114 Alcuin, *Epistola* 114, ed. Dümmler, 166-170. For other discussions on connections, see Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 212 n. 417; Hill, Wulfsgie, 150; Keynes, Wulfsgie, 63; Roach, Æthelred, 156; *Epistola*, 41, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, 227.

115 As far as *qui te elegit sibi sacerdotem* in Alcuin, *Epistola* 114, ed. Dümmler, 167-168, l.5; *Epistola*, 41, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, 228-229.

116 Alcuin, *Epistola* 114, ed. Dümmler, 168, l.5-171 from *qui te elegit sibi sacerdotem*.

117 *Epistola*, 41, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, 229.

was probably Æthelweard of the western provinces.<sup>118</sup> The letter also shows an interest in encouraging secular engagement with Christian values. Instead of reminding Wulfsgie of his duties towards widows and orphans in the manner of Alcuin's advice, Wulfsgie was to ensure that secular rulers showed mercy.<sup>119</sup> This echoed Ælfweard's letter to Sigeric. If this letter was indeed written by Sigeric it suggests that his tactic was to encourage bishops to become involved in the struggle against the threat posed to the church by powerful men, and that he used the same methods of exhortation as Abbot Ælfweard had used.

A fourth letter, *Epistola Johannis Papae ad Elfricum Ducem*, written by Pope John XV (985-996) demanded that Ealdorman Ælfric should cease from *avida cupiditate* in seizing the lands of Glastonbury Abbey, threatening him with excommunication and eternal hell-fire.<sup>120</sup> The letter was addressed either to Ælfric *cild*, who served as an ealdorman between 983 and his exile in 985, or Ealdorman Ælfric of Hampshire, leaving a more open dating of c. 983-996.<sup>121</sup> Ælfric *cild* had been behind the appointment as abbot of Abingdon of his brother Eadwine, who ran down the abbey's estates,<sup>122</sup> while Ælfric of Hampshire was the third English negotiator for *II Æthelred*.<sup>123</sup> Given that the letter notes that Ælfric's proximity to the abbey (*cum propinquus habitando effectus es*) provided him with the opportunity to despoil Glastonbury,<sup>124</sup> England's wealthiest abbey, it seems more likely that it was Ælfric *cild*, who perhaps received estates and favours from his brother in advance of these losses. If so, this highlights the extent of the challenge faced by the church in the mid-980s, as it grappled with the consequences of the seizure of great monastic houses by aristocratic families, who also exercised control over public power in the localities.

The threats that Ealdormen Æthelweard and Ælfric posed to Sherborne and Glastonbury respectively are but two examples of a series of attacks on ecclesiastical lands and properties by powerful officials during the late 980s, demonstrating that the threat identified in Ælfweard's letter was real. Research on the anti-ecclesiastical politics has shown firstly, that King Æthelred II was personally involved in some of the devastations, and secondly, that conflicts between court factions were a major cause of the attacks, following the death of Bishop Æthelwold of Winchester (963-984), who had guided Æthelred II during his minority.<sup>125</sup> The attacks could not be resolved by simple measures, or by letting the storm run its course. The advent of small Viking raids during the 980s, comprising attacks on Cheshire and Thanet in 980, Padstow in 981, Portland in 982 and Watchet in 988,<sup>126</sup> perhaps added a further dimension to the problem from the church's perspective. Following the example of

118 Keynes, Wulfsgie, 63.

119 *Epistola*, 41, ed. Whitelock *et al.*, 229. For a discussion of clemency in practice, see below at nn. 244-247.

120 *Epistola Johannis Papae ad Elfricum Ducem*, ed. Stubbs, 396-397 (BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 169v-170r).

121 Keynes, *Diplomas*, 182 n. 104.

122 Roach, Æthelred, 101-102.

123 *II Æthelred*, c. 1, ed. Liebermann, 220; trans. Whitelock, 437-438; for a discussion of Ælfric's role, see Lavelle, Law, death and peacemaking, 128-129.

124 *Epistola Johannis Papae ad Elfricum Ducem*, ed. Stubbs, 396.

125 Abels, Æthelred, 29-31; Keynes, *Diplomas*, 176-186; Lavelle, Æthelred, 50-51; Roach, Æthelred, 100-111; Williams, Æthelred, 26-29.

126 Abels, Æthelred, 32-33; Keynes, *Historical Context*, 85-86; Lavelle, Æthelred, 53-54; Roach, Æthelred, 116; Williams, Æthelred, 43.

King Alfred, a claim could be made to transfer lands held by the church which the Crown exercised some rights over to the secular aristocracy to strengthen their resources in fighting against the Vikings.<sup>127</sup> Looked at from this perspective, it was in the interests of the English Church to bring an end to these Viking raids before they increased in size in order to argue against the case for maintaining the status quo on the secularization of church lands and perhaps even increasing the programme.

In the late 980s Archbishop Dunstan had used prophecies of doom, criticisms of the king and cursing to defend church property.<sup>128</sup> Catherine Cubitt has shown that these accounts, first recorded in *Vita Dunstani* and written in the first decade of the eleventh century, were developed by later writers, who wished to emphasise Dunstan's credentials as a saint, behind which there was an authentic tradition.<sup>129</sup> But these curses did not put a stop to the anti-ecclesiastical policies during the late 980s, and as Cubitt has shown, the solution was worked out via the politics of royal remorse from c. 993.<sup>130</sup> We can assess Sigeric's contribution to the resolution of the conflict not only through letters but also via other ecclesiastical history sources. While serving as archbishop, Sigeric may have had a real interest in preaching. Ælfric the homilist (fl. c. 950-1010) asked Sigeric to make suggestions and improvements to his two volumes of 40 *Catholic Homilies*, which benefited the clergy in liturgy and prayer and encouraged the laity to engage with devotion with the precepts of the church.<sup>131</sup> The request shows Sigeric's connections with different areas of church life, which had the scope to bring anti-ecclesiastical policies into relief and thereby to argue for change.

Another way to apply these tactics was through involvement in local politics, and given the brevity of Sigeric's career as archbishop, we are well-served, with two case studies, one arising in Berkshire and the other in Essex. A charter c. 990x992 recorded how a widow, Wynflæd, sought to conduct a property exchange, but her rights were challenged and the case was taken to the Berkshire shire court.<sup>132</sup> Rather than enlisting a local network of secular power, Wynflæd enlisted the support of Archbishop Sigeric and the diocesan bishop, Ordbrigt, enabling her to call witnesses, including Queen dowager Ælfthryth, with the case being resolved in Wynflæd's favour.<sup>133</sup> The case shows the willingness of Sigeric to become involved in local politics beyond the hinterland of Canterbury, and we can view this as evidence of his strengthening power as a political leader.

The will of Æthelric recorded the gift of Bocking in Essex to Canterbury, together with other grants by him to the church.<sup>134</sup> The absence of any gifts to lay beneficiaries (with the caveat of a life interest to his wife Leofwynn) sets this will apart from other East Anglian wills,<sup>135</sup> and its terms may have been shaped by the events described in a charter drawn up in 995x999.<sup>136</sup> The charter recorded that many years before, Æthelric »was in the plot that

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127 Fleming, *Monastic lands*, 250-5, 261-4; cf. Dumville, *Ecclesiastical lands*.

128 Cubitt, *Archbishop Dunstan*, 149-156.

129 Cubitt, *Archbishop Dunstan*, 149-156.

130 Cubitt, *Politics of remorse*; for further comment, see Roach, *Æthelred*, 137-146.

131 Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 213.

132 Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 990.

133 Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 988.

134 S 1501.

135 S 1483, 1486, 1494, 1527, 1538.

136 S 939; Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 1002.



Sweyn was to be received in Essex when he first came thither with a fleet«, probably referring to the otherwise unrecorded leadership of Sweyn Forkbeard, king of Denmark (c. 987-1014) in the 991 raid, or to his role in the 994 raid.<sup>137</sup> The charter recorded that »the King, before many witnesses made it known to Archbishop Sigeric, who was his advocate for the sake of the estate of Bocking«. <sup>138</sup> Sigeric was willing to take up the defence of Æthelric, but after the deaths of Æthelric and Sigeric, the case reopened, and Archbishop Ælfric took over the role of advocate of the widow Leofwynn. By 995x999 Æthelred II had little sympathy with the way in which the case had been handled, but in 991 (or 994) Sigeric had taken the risk of being willing to stand up to royal power to defend Æthelric. Such an approach showed that the advice from Abbot Ælfweard had stuck and how Sigeric was willing to become involved in local politics for the benefit of the church. To understand how he came to occupy such a position, we need to turn our attention to his journey to Rome and connections between the English and Norman courts in the year before Maldon.

### *Lists of Authority and International Diplomacy in 990*

Archbishop Sigeric's journey to Rome in 990 to receive his pallium led to the compilation of a source of major importance to ecclesiastical historians, namely a two-part list of 23 churches which he visited in Rome (*Adventus Archiepiscopi nostri Sigerici ad Romam*) and 54 places that he stopped at on the return journey to Canterbury (*Submansiones de Roma usque ad mare*). It was copied into BL Cotton Tiberius B.V Part I (more famous for Ælfric's *De Temporibus Anni* and the »Wonders of the East«).<sup>139</sup> The two sublists are important because they provide a catalogue of churches in Rome in 990,<sup>140</sup> and the itinerary of the *Via Francigena*.<sup>141</sup> But the visit to Rome may also have been used to achieve political objectives, notably in dealing with the linked problem of anti-ecclesiastical policies emanating from the royal court and bringing to an end a new phase of Viking raids.

In Rome Sigeric may have met or heard about Leo, bishop of Trevi, as he visited the church of the Holy Apostles of Trevi. Leo was appointed as papal legate in late 990 to broker peace between Duke Richard I of Normandy (942-996) and King Æthelred II of England, but it is unclear whether Pope John XV or Archbishop Sigeric was the instigator of this strategy.<sup>142</sup> Nonetheless, the benefits to both parties may have been quickly apparent. Pope John XV would be able to strengthen his hold over the papacy by gaining a reputation as an international peacemaker, while Sigeric could hope that he would gain credit for removing Viking access to the Normandy ports. The events are set out in the fifth letter, namely a universal papal letter, in which Æthelred II is addressed as king of Wessex (*rex Saxonum Occidentali-um*), rather than as king of the English.<sup>143</sup> This may have been used to create less of a sharp

137 S 939; Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 1004. For views in favour of 991, see Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 1006; Howard, *Swein Forkbeard's Invasions*, 37; Lavelle, Æthelred, 70; Roach, Æthelred, 121-122; Scragg, *Return of the Vikings*, 68-69.

138 Brooks and Kelly, *Charters of Canterbury*, 1005.

139 *Adventus Archiepiscopi nostri Sigerici ad Romam*, ed. Stubbs, 391-392; *Istae sunt submansiones de Roma usque ad mare*, ed. Stubbs, 392-395.

140 Ortenburg, Archbishop Sigeric's journey; *eadem*, *English Church*, 144-146, 176-177, 235-236.

141 Birch, *Pilgrimage to Rome*, 41-43; Champ, *English Pilgrimage*, 28-30.

142 Tinti, England and the papacy, 92.

143 *Epistola Johannis papae XVmi*, ed. Stubbs, 397-398 (BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 172v-173r). On the significance of changes of titles from kings of Wessex to England and rulers of Britain, see Molyneux, *Formation of the English Kingdom*, 206-12. For texts of coronation ordines, see Pratt, *English Coronation Ordines*.

distinction between King Æthelred II and Duke Richard I, or to remind Æthelred II that the status of his royal title was partly linked to papal recognition. John XV recorded that by Christmas Day 990 the papal legate had reached the court of King Æthelred II, who summoned a royal council, with his secular advisers and wiser counsellors from the two orders (i.e. the monastic and secular clergy) to hear the pope's letter.<sup>144</sup> A mission, headed by Bishop Æthelsige of Ramsbury and two secular courtiers, was despatched to the court of Duke Richard I, and by March 991 a peace treaty had been agreed in which both parties agreed not to give aid to each other's enemies.<sup>145</sup> Following this diplomatic breakthrough, the English court may have thought that it was in a powerful position to bring an end to the Viking raids, and this peacemaking process probably strengthened the political power of Archbishop Sigeric. For a reflection of these developments, we need to turn to lists of office-holders in BL Cotton Tiberius B.V Part 1.

The list of Sigeric's visits to churches in Rome and his itinerary is one of 39 lists between folios 19r and 23v, the remainder of which are lists of secular and ecclesiastical office-holders. The lists were based upon an original source written at Canterbury or Glastonbury by a scribe close to Archbishop Sigeric, and the epithet *amicus Dei* (friend of God) was attached to Sigeric's name.<sup>146</sup> The 39 lists begin with the bishops of Rome until 884/5, the 72 disciples of Christ and the Roman emperors from Augustus to Otto III (980-1002).<sup>147</sup> By then listing the bishops of Jerusalem, Alexandria and Antioch, the scribe indicated the authority of the bishop of Rome over the Eastern Christian churches,<sup>148</sup> and by then copying the list of the archbishops of Canterbury, he signalled similar transmission of authority to Canterbury.<sup>149</sup> The primacy of Canterbury over the English Church was made clear by the geographical organisation of the lists of English bishoprics.<sup>150</sup> For example, the list for the bishops of the South Saxons (Selsey) was ahead of Worcester and York, even though Selsey had only been founded in the early eighth century, in contrast to the unbroken traditions of religious life at Worcester and York from the seventh century.<sup>151</sup> The ordering of the lists demonstrated that ecclesiastical authority was transmitted from Canterbury southwards, westwards and northwards. By placing the list of the kings of Wessex and England next, at folio 22r, in the same opening as the bishops of England, the scribe sought the same effect as at opening 20v-21r as at 19v-20r, where lists of popes, disciples of Christ and the Roman emperors appeared in one opening.<sup>152</sup> Only on the following opening does the reader come to the genealogies of other Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, commencing with the Northumbrian kings, followed by the next opening with lists of abbots of Glastonbury, tenth-century popes from John X (914-928) to

144 *Epistola Johannis papae XVmi*, ed. Stubbs, 397-398 (BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 172v-173r): *moxque ex parte nostra salutato obtulit litteras, quas ille miseramus; qui accersitis cunctis sui regni fidelibus utriusque ordinis sapientioribus.*

145 Williams, Æthelred, 46, 48; Lebeq and Gautier, *Routeways*, 27.

146 Dumville, *Catalogue texts*, 55-56; Howe, *Writing the Map*, 157; Ker, *Catalogue*, 255-256.

147 *Eleventh Century Miscellany*, ed. McGurk *et al.*, 66-67 (plates section: BL Cotton Tiberius B. V Part 1, fols. 19v-20r).

148 *Eleventh Century Miscellany*, ed. McGurk *et al.*, 68-69 (plates section: BL Cotton Tiberius B. V Part 1, fols. 20v-21r).

149 *Eleventh Century Miscellany*, ed. McGurk *et al.*, 69 (plates section: BL Cotton Tiberius B. V Part 1, fol. 21r).

150 *Eleventh Century Miscellany*, ed. McGurk *et al.*, 69-71 (plates section: BL Cotton Tiberius B. V Part 1, fols. 21r-22r).

151 Lapidge *et al.*, *Blackwell Encyclopaedia*, 415, 488-490, 497-499.

152 *Eleventh Century Miscellany*, ed. McGurk *et al.*, 66-67, 70-71 (plates section: BL Cotton Tiberius B. V Part 1, fols. 19v-20r, 21v-22r).

John XV and Sigeric's two-part list as a result of his journey to Rome.<sup>153</sup> The organisation of the lists served to make two political points. Firstly, Sigeric's journey had served to strengthen connections with papal power in the contemporary era, and, secondly, authority from Canterbury and Rome strengthened the case for King Æthelred II in claiming lordship over the whole of Britain. This provided a powerful message and could have started to persuade the king to abandon anti-ecclesiastical policies and to work with Archbishop Sigeric in framing domestic and international policies.

Careers can be shaped by responding to the leading figures from the previous generation. Sigeric followed the example of Archbishop Dunstan in seeking to reverse anti-ecclesiastical policies, but achieved this end through different tactics. Exhortation letters have been neglected as sources for understanding the context of Viking raids and peacemaking at the turn of the 990s, partly perhaps because of the richness of the other historical sources and partly because of their religious content. But it is clear there was an active process of reception and modification. Abbot Ælfweard encouraged Sigeric not to flinch in the struggle to reverse attacks against the church, and the letter to Wulfsige shows how other bishops were exhorted to join in this programme. Sigeric found ways both to stand up to secular power and to involve *saeculares principes* in these initiatives, whether through encouraging the laity to engage with the church via sermons or through direct involvement in local politics, and hence to turn the tide of anti-ecclesiastical policies.

### Conclusion

Two decades have passed since Lieberman set out his model on parallels in state formation and their elites' control of accoutrements of power for sedentary states in western Europe and South-East Asia, in contrast to developments in the steppe and other landscapes less suited to supporting agricultural economies.<sup>154</sup> In this model, the diffusion of ideas and practices is less significant than the emphasis upon the intersection between different ecologies and environments with the threats posed by »barbarians«, nomads and other non-sedentary states and societies.<sup>155</sup> Scott's work has served to extend this model both chronologically and geographically, and given greater emphasis to the role of »barbarians« and nomadic groups in the formation of sedentary states.<sup>156</sup> Our approach uses the work of Lieberman and Scott as context, but in addition to Conrad's first subtype of comparative global history with its emphasis on themes, in this case on the development of charter and sedentary states and their relationships with non-agrarian states and peoples, this article embeds Conrad's third subtype, concerned with how global transformations provide a context for local/national challenges with distinct pasts and outcomes.<sup>157</sup> As a result, in our approach there is more

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153 *Eleventh Century Miscellany*, ed. McGurk *et al.*, 57, 72-75 (plates section: BL Cotton Tiberius B. V Part 1, fols. 22v-24r).

154 Lieberman, *Strange Parallels* Vols. 1-2.

155 For discussion, see above, nn. 4-14.

156 Scott, *Against the Grain*; discussion, see above, nn. 3-13.

157 Conrad, *What is Global History?*, 3-11. On differences in the outcomes from a fiscal-state perspective above, see n. 6. On distinctions between »vertical« treaties, emphasising the superiority of the Chinese empire, and »horizontal« treaties, where sovereignty was shared (as with the Northern Song and Liao empires), see Wang, *Harmony and War*, 57; Wright, *From War to Diplomatic Parity*, 100.

concern with national and regional historiographical debates and the weighing up of primary sources than is needed for the first subtype on its own. Our comparison points to common patterns in peacemaking at the turn of the eleventh century, and our discussion of the Chanyuan Covenant and its immediate aftermath leads to three observations:

1. Chief councillor Kou Zhun played a decisive role in shaping new strategies in dealing with the Liao, but once it became clear that the strategy had not been successful, he lost favour.
2. A more pragmatic approach gave the Liao the upper hand in the peace negotiations, and paved the way for a significant loss of status for the Northern Song dynasty through tribute payments.
3. Religiously sanctioned letters are important sources for political history and the making of peace agreements, as well as for the study of sacred rituals and religion.

With these in mind, our focus in analysing peacemaking for England has been upon three themes, namely the stance taken by Archbishop Sigeric, whose advice led to the use of tribute payments in making peace with the Vikings;<sup>158</sup> reviewing contemporary changes in the evaluation of the peace agreement between the A version of the *Old English Royal Annals* and that two decades later in the C (D and E) versions; and using religious letters and ecclesiastical lists of authority as sources for political history. Discussion of these sources is used for looking at parallels between the peacemaking of the Northern Song with the Liao Empire and of the English with the Vikings,<sup>159</sup> as distinct from the longer-term consequences of these agreements upon the organisation of state structures.

Perceptions of the Kitans and Vikings as »barbarians« probably played into Northern Song and English senses of insecurity, in contrast to the actual goals of the former, which on the Kitan Liao side can be shown to have been more limited than wishing to destroy the Northern Song. Substantial raids by the Vikings in 991 and Kitan Liao in 1004, involving the mobilisation of 93 ships and around 200,000 cavalry, respectively, were enough to convince English and Northern Song negotiators that peace with considerable concessions was the best option available. But to put the emphasis upon the specifics of the raids at the expense of the build-up misses a key point. In each case large raids came after major advances in the political and military positions of the supposed adversary, i.e. the Northern Song or the English. The strengthening of defences in 1000, perhaps as a prelude to an invasion of the Sixteen Prefectures, and the 990/991 peace agreement between England and Normandy probably had the effect of narrowing the political options of the Liao Empire and the Vikings. The last time a Chinese state south of the Liao Empire had strengthened its waterway defences, there had been a loss of prefectures and passes in Guannan, and the substantially greater power of the Northern Song dynasty by 1000, as compared to the Later Zhou in 959, could have compounded fear that the Sixteen Prefectures were about to be lost, unless the Liao Empire

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158 The events between 992 and Sigeric's death in 994 are outside the scope of this article, notably his role in *II Æthelred*, S 880 (994), in which privileges were granted to the bishopric of Cornwall, S 882 (994) dealing with the payment of tribute to Vikings, and the linking of his death to a comet (*ASC*, trans. Whitelock *et al.*, 84).

159 For Lieberman's assessment of Song state and military/political relationships with steppe peoples, see *idem*, *Strange Parallels* 2, 500; for comment on state organisation, see *ibid.*, 513.

responded forcefully and quickly. Likewise, loss of access to Normandy for the Vikings would have meant that they would have lost connections with the only Viking polity which had established itself in the axis between England and continental Europe. In this reading, the strategies adopted by the English and Northern Song had the undesired effect of forcing the hands of their opponents to launch major raids in 991 and 1004 respectively, and following the victories of the latter, peace using tribute became the political solution.

Peacemaking is often viewed through the lens of the outcomes. Decisions to pay tribute in 991 and 1005 came to be viewed as errors from the perspective of charter/sedentary states. For the Northern Song dynasty it brought with it a burden of political inferiority (independent of its achievements in culture, society and economy), and put pressure on Northern Song rulers to undertake administrative reforms.<sup>160</sup> In England the political cost was also high. The kings of Wessex between the late ninth and the mid-tenth century changed their status from rulers of one region to become the kings of the English, but the tribute strategy came to be viewed as the key factor in explaining the ending of this dynasty's power and prestige, first with its exile in 1016 and then, 50 years later, with the Norman conquest. Eadmer set out the problem posed by the Viking raids during the reign of Æthelred II from an outcomes perspective succinctly:

The king instead of meeting them in arms panic-stricken shamelessly offered them money sueing for peace; where-upon they accepted the price and retired to their homes, only to return in still greater numbers and still more ruthless, from renewed invasion to receive increased rewards.<sup>161</sup>

In this context, it seems reasonable to place the blame upon the ineptitude and laziness of the ruler, as indeed Eadmer did and others have since done, or to take a different tack and suggest that the problem lay with the advisers and negotiators, who were not up to the task of providing the ruler with sound advice. But the framework in which rulers and negotiators worked was not a blank canvas, and another way to address these problems is to look at the limited nature of the political options that were available. To cede territory in the form of a legal agreement, along the lines of the *Alfred-Guthrum* treaty,<sup>162</sup> or to set up the Vikings in a vassal state, along the lines of the foundation of Normandy, were less palatable options.<sup>163</sup> This leaves us with two alternatives – either rulers and advisers had a precocious understanding of how tribute payments could be accommodated economically, or we come back to the question of what led to the decision to agree to peace so soon.

At this point, we can see if it is possible to take a counterfactual position and suggest that calculations related to trade may have meant that peace linked to tribute was viewed as a low-cost solution. Arguments that peace would support trade and profits, hence paying for the tribute, could have been made at both courts. The evidence does not record deliberations at the witan, but Northern Song evidence provides some insights into these debates. When Kou Zhun wished to continue with the conflict, Song Zhenzong replied: »Several tens of

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160 For these themes, see above, nn. 6, 23.

161 *Eadmer's History of Recent Events*, ed. Bosanquet, 4.

162 Whitelock, ed., *EHD*, 416-417.

163 For ninth-century criticisms of the creation of vassalage relationships with Viking leaders, see Nelson (ed.), *Annals of St-Bertin*, 51.

years later, someone will emerge capable of stemming their attacks. I cannot stand the sight of our people's suffering, so just accept their peace overtures.«<sup>164</sup> This view may have been informed by fear of the forced movement of Han Chinese populations. Patricia Ebrey argues that between the tenth and the thirteenth centuries, the Song dynasties were exceptional in not seeking to resettle large groups of captives as a state policy after victories in war, and in Song society disconnection from the graves and lands of ancestors was regarded as one of the harshest losses to be suffered.<sup>165</sup> This suggests that arguments on the benefits of trade were not remembered as being of pivotal importance in bringing the Northern Song to the negotiating table, and it seems unlikely that it played much of a role in England. Instead, a parallel process is much easier to envisage, in which advisers such as Archbishop Sigeric, and perhaps King Æthelred himself were keen to ensure that the path of violence which would follow from large Viking raids did not occur. If then, fear of the destruction, rather than economic calculations of the low overall costs, was of greater importance, this takes us back to the advice given and in particular to the role played in an English context by Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury. In a memoir of the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985, David Goodall reflected upon »the universal tendency of elected governments to view international negotiations through the prism of their own domestic political preoccupations«. <sup>166</sup> This perspective can be used to recognise the issues at stake in the events leading up to and immediately after the English defeat at the Battle of Maldon. For the archbishops of Canterbury, pressure upon the church from secular families, fused with the divisions within the royal court, was the pressing domestic political issue.

Despite Sigeric's close connections with Archbishop Dunstan, he followed different tactics in dealing with the anti-ecclesiastical policies of the late 980s. Sigeric seems to have acted upon the agenda set out in part in contemporary letters in the early 990s, whereby the threat to the English church from the royal court had to be confronted through a series of initiatives in domestic politics: bishops were encouraged to become more involved in local politics in standing up to secular power; monastic reform at Canterbury was placed on hold; and the laity were encouraged to engage with the values in homilies. The copying of lists of authority into BL Cotton Tiberius B. V Part 1 provides one indication of this political programme, in which it was shown how religious authority could be used to bolster the status of King Æthelred as ruler of the English. Another is provided by the order in which three letters were copied into BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV. The letter setting out Ealdorman Ælfric's despoilation of Glastonbury was followed by Abbot Ælfweard's letter of exhortation to Sigeric, and Pope John XV's letter setting out the peace agreement between England and Normandy.<sup>167</sup> The first letter in this sequence identified the nature of the threat faced by the English church from attacks organised by an ealdorman; the second set out the political programme and frame of mind needed to overcome this challenge through adaption of Alcuin's letter to Archbishop Æthelheard; and the third recorded the international political settlement which should have

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164 Fang, *Power Structures*, 136 (citation and trans. of Li, *Xu Zishi Tongjian Changbian*).

165 Ebrey, State-forced relocations in China.

166 Goodall, Making of the Anglo-Irish agreement, 30.

167 BL Cotton Tiberius A. XV, fol. 169v-173r.

brought an end to the small Viking raids. But the strategy can be viewed as a mistake, in a comparative framework, because by forging an alliance between England and Normandy, the Vikings were potentially cut off from moving between England and continental Europe, in the same way as the strengthening of the waterways along the Song-Liao border represented a significant threat to the Kitans. Nonetheless Sigeric's actions on the international stage and his handling of domestic politics meant, firstly, that he was well-placed to take the lead in the negotiations after the English defeat, and, secondly, that he had a strong incentive to ensure that the strategy of overturning the seizure of church properties and rights was protected, perhaps explaining the epithet of »friend of God«. <sup>168</sup>

The advice provided by Kou Zhun and Sigeric, archbishop of Canterbury, shaped political strategies designed to deal with the Liao Empire and the Vikings respectively at the turn of the eleventh century. The ways in which these common patterns played out suggests that the models of Lieberman and Scott can be applied to the early Middle Ages. Global comparison suggests that the provocative policies adopted by the English and the Northern Song, compounded by senses of insecurity and tactical disadvantages, played a decisive role in the factors which led to raids in 991 and 1004 and the nature of the peacemaking after defeat.

In this comparative framework, we are not concerned with whether King Æthelred II and Song Zhenzong were ill-prepared for rulership on account of their accession at a young age, and/or whether they became rulers of good or poor judgment. Our focus is upon the events and political processes before the military defeats which shaped political decision making after Maldon and Chanyuan, and in particular with the political programme of Sigeric and his advisers to push back against the seizure of church lands through letters, domestic politics and diplomatic initiatives. Tribute had a clear rationale. It not only protected the church from further Viking attacks and a resumption of anti-ecclesiastical politics within the English kingdom, but it may have been used to argue against the view that Viking victories were momentous messages from God setting out judgments on current political policies. By the end of the reign of Æthelred II, however, evaluation of the peace-agreement of 991 had changed, in much the same way as the Chanyuan Covenant soon »began its downward slide« from which it arguably never recovered. <sup>169</sup> The retrospective clarity provided by sources shaped by Cnut's seizure of the English kingdom provides fascinating insights into a contemporary re-evaluation of the past, but despite these criticisms and subsequent commentaries, we can reject the view that tribute after defeat was »the least desirable option«. <sup>170</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Above, n. 146.

<sup>169</sup> Lorge, *Reunification of China*, 30.

<sup>170</sup> Tao, *Two Sons of Heaven*, 16 commenting on tribute payment after the Chanyuan covenant.

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### *Abbreviations*

ASC: *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*

BL: British Library

EHD: *English Historical Documents*

MGH: *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*

S: Electronic Sawyer: Accessed on 6 September 2021 [esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/about/index.html](http://esawyer.lib.cam.ac.uk/about/index.html).

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