

**‘The Scattering of Gems’: Assessing Tostig Godwineson as
Earl of Northumbria, c. 1055-1065**

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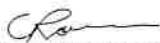
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Historiography.....	6
History of Northumbria.....	11
Chapter Two: Tostig's Appointment to the Earldom.....	17
Expectations of Medieval Rulers.....	19
Chapter Three: A Controversial Rule.....	24
The Church.....	24
Taxes and Laws.....	27
The Northern Borders.....	35
Chapter Four: Harold and Tostig's Feud.....	39
Chapter Five: The Rebellion of 1065.....	48
Chapter Six: Tyrant or Victim of Betrayal?	53
Chapter Seven: Conclusion.....	65
Appendix.....	70
References.....	72

ABSTRACT

This dissertation aims to assess Tostig Godwineson's role as earl of Northumbria from 1055-1065 C.E. This assessment will be done through: interpreting his post-Conquest reputation through investigation of the ideological role and expectations of medieval rulers and governmental appointees in pre-Conquest England; examining the available extant texts for evidence of damaging initiatives intentionally implemented by the earl; also by investigating Harold Godwineson's role in Tostig's usurpation as a result of the revolt of 1065; in addition, it will examine specific accusations against the Earl as well as possible secondary factors; and, finally, how these grievances affected Tostig's position as earl of Northumbria. Chapter One explores the history of Northumbria and its relationship with its early rulers through the latter kings of England. Chapter Two investigates the motivation behind Edward the Confessor's decision to appoint Tostig to the earldom in 1055 and explores the reasons why his appointment was significant. It will also summarize the expectations of medieval rulers in order to provide context in relation to Tostig's treatment and reputation as earl of Northumbria. Chapter Three focuses on the accusations made against Earl Tostig by the northern thegns and explores the available extant evidence in order to support these claims. Chapter Four investigates the possible reasons for the schism between Tostig and his older brother and earl of Wessex, Harold Godwineson, and highlights the motives and subsequent actions of Harold and his role in Tostig's downfall. Chapter Five is a chronology of events of the rebellion of 1065 and explores the actions of earls Tostig and Harold, King Edward, the northern and Mercian nobles as well as the rebels. Chapter Six is a breakdown of the specific evidence against the Godwineson brothers and their roles prior to and during the rebellion and provides a synopsis of all the evidence against Tostig in relation to the expectations of his appointment as earl; lastly, I will explain my theory regarding Harold's role in the rebellion and ultimate exile of his younger brother. Chapter Seven concludes this assessment of Tostig Godwineson.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction, Historiography, and History

Introduction

Edward the Confessor's reign of England (c. 1042—1066) is a period shrouded in mystery and intrigue. Behind the veil of wealth and power, his rule was fraught with political crises, civil conflicts, and border disputes with the Welsh and Scots. Contemporaneous with major continental and Scandinavian political events, this was a critical period in the history of western Europe. Although he had half the blood of Æthelred ('Unred'), the late English king, running through his veins, Edward was culturally Norman; therefore, he was well versed in the culture, language, and mode of government of the region¹. Once he became king of England, Edward invited many Norman nobles to take leadership positions throughout the kingdom in an effort to bring the familiar culture of Normandy to the country he now ruled. These appointments caused a level of mistrust between the landed Anglo-Saxon nobles and the French interlopers.² In addition, Edward was not a warlike king and preferred other noble pursuits, such as hunting. As a result, he relied heavily on the powerful figures in his court to advise and guide him in times of conflict.

The most influential of Edward's counselors was Godwine, earl of Wessex. Godwine was an Anglo-Saxon noble, and his wife Gytha was of Danish royal stock. The Earl and his sons

¹ Edward and his older brother Alfred were raised in the Norman court after having fled England with their mother, Emma of Normandy. *For more information on the early life of Edward, see Frank Barlow's book *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster*.*

² Thegns and earls were part of the system of nobility in Anglo-Saxon society. The term *thegn* outlived the Anglo-Saxons and can be found in Early Modern poetry.

stood as a bulwark against the hoard of Norman nobles placed in positions of power by Edward in the 1040s through 1060s. Earl Godwine, along with his sons, recognized that too many bishoprics had been given away to foreigners, so they sought to disrupt Edward's appointments.³ For example, in the early 1050s, it was discovered that Bishop Hermann, a well-known church reformist appointed by Edward, planned to move his seat to Malmesbury Abbey, but the Godwines staunchly opposed the move.⁴ Frank Barlow makes the point in his book *The English Church, 1000-1066: A Constitutional History* that although Hermann was a reformist, trained in Lotharingia, Earl Godwine was not against continental church reform per se, but instead intended to prevent the Church from obtaining too much land, and, therefore, gaining too much wealth.⁵ When King Edward recognized that the Godwines' immense power consistently interrupted his rule, a coup was arranged and carried out in 1051.⁶ But his plan to disinherit the powerful family failed and Robert of Jumièges, the King's accomplice, fled back to the continent. After this crisis and short exile, the family returned and firmly planted themselves in the halls of power in 1052.⁷ They selected a bishop whom they trusted to take over Canterbury, a man called Stigand. This

³ Stenton, F. (1971). *Anglo-Saxon England*. (3rd edition). Oxford: Clarendon House. p. 25. The author notes Edward's affinity for his Norman counterparts in the early years of his rule. 'There is no doubt that his patronage of Norman knights and churchmen offended English feeling.'

⁴ Barlow, B. (1963). *The English Church, 1000-1066: A Constitutional History*. Longmans. p. 86. Bishop Herman served at Edward's chaplain. Herman was dissatisfied with his bishopric due to the small revenue streams. The bishop received permission from Edward to take the position of abbot in Malmesbury Abbey.

⁵ Lotharingia (Lorraine),

⁶ Sweyn Godwineson, the oldest of the Godwine children, was a major factor in this tumultuous period, for he kidnapped the abbess of Leominster and left in 1047. Earl Godwine supported Sweyn and protested to Edward when he was punished. *For a more conclusive account of this period, see; Baxter, 'Politics', pp. 1196-97.*

⁷ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 568-9. Stenton empathizes with Godwine but writes that the near civil war his campaign caused was unacceptable as a magnate. In addition, the episode exposed the weakness of the king. 'The *Chronicle* states that the king's men refused to fight against Godwine in 1052 because they felt that the slaughter of Englishmen would leave the country open to invasion. (Notably by Harald II Siggurdson)'

move forced Edward to accept the Godwine family's immense sphere of influence.⁸ Although the patriarch was often at odds with the King, his sons became preeminent figures in the Edwardian court following Earl Godwine's death.⁹ However, the memory of the unrest of 1051-2 would not fade in the minds of the English ruling class.

Harold Godwineson, Godwine's eldest living son, took control of the earldom of Wessex following his father's death in 1053. Upon Harold's appointment, the *Vita Ædwardi Regis* notes, 'The whole English host breathed again and was consoled for its loss'.¹⁰ As made clear by the author, the Godwines were very popular among the southern English and this favoritism increased their influence.¹¹ The family also controlled an immense amount of land, thus providing Harold and his younger brother Tostig with enough wealth to back their political and military machinations. Tostig Godwineson, the second living son of Earl Godwine, was appointed to the earldom of Northumbria in 1055. Despite being well liked in the South, following his death, his reputation became that of a ruthless and selfish noble who clung to power through intimidation and violence. Few exceptions exist in extant texts, leaving post-Conquest writers and historians with the ability to portray Tostig's role in the events of the 1060s in a harsh and negative light.

Therefore, when considering the overall image of Earl Tostig Godwineson gleaned from the various histories of the period, one must question whether the lack of extant texts and

⁸ Morris, M. (2012). *The Norman Conquest: The Battle of Hastings and the fall of Anglo-Saxon England*. New York: Pegasus Books. pp. 98-9.

⁹ Sweyn Godwineson eventually died while on pilgrimage on the Continent after years of trouble in England.

¹⁰ *The Life of King Edward who rests at Westminster*. (1992). (F. Barlow, Ed.) (2nd edition). Oxford. pp. 46-9.

¹¹ Baxter, 'The Politics', pp. 1196-98. One reason why civil war was avoided in 1051-2 is because the southern English refused to fight against Godwine, whom they considered a fellow Englishman.

missing evidence has allowed for a strategic revision of history in order to suit a pro-Norman point of view. This dissertation questions the reasons for Tostig's fall from grace in comparison to his older brother, who rose to the ultimate position, king of the English, in 1066. Are the negative descriptions found in the contemporary records, like the various versions of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, fair and accurate representations of Earl Tostig, or has his visage been marred by pro-Norman authors and historians?

A second question this dissertation will attempt to answer surrounds the relationship between Tostig and his older brother, Harold Godwineson, earl of Wessex. Their estrangement in 1065 is curious due to their prior successful working relationship, for they both enjoyed the favor of King Edward in addition to wealth and popularity in the South. For these reasons, it can be argued that the failure of Harold and Tostig's partnership ultimately contributed to their deaths in 1066. Interestingly, the initiating event that caused the fissure continues to be debated, as it was not explicitly documented in contemporary texts. But evidence suggests that Tostig's appointment to the earldom of Northumbria was jeopardized by Harold Godwineson and his allies for the purpose of consolidating power in southern England, securing allies in the North, and strengthening his bid for the English throne.

The overall aim of this dissertation is to clarify Tostig Godwineson's role in both the genesis and execution of the Northumbrian rebellion of 1065. This will be done by examining Tostig's actions as earl, to include: his political strategies, his relationships with the Mercian and Northumbrian nobles, and his foreign policy regarding Scotland. Notably, there is a disconnect between what is stated as fact in contemporary records and what has been extrapolated by modern historians. As a result, Earl Tostig's political maneuvers were translated with bias by post-Conquest writers seeking to discredit his efforts and mar his reputation in favor of a

Norman narrative. Therefore, by examining both contemporary and modern literature regarding the decade of Godwineson's tenure as earl of Northumbria, a clearer image of the Earl as a man, not a political figure, will be constructed. By doing this, I will argue that Tostig Godwineson should be remembered as an energetic leader and loyal Edwardian, not as a villain.

It should be noted that when studying this period, it is clear that Earl Tostig's struggle to control the North is often overshadowed by the enormity of the Conquest. On this, Frank Stenton writes, 'The last sixteen years of the Confessor's reign are often regarded as the prologue to the Norman Conquest'.¹² For this reason, the modern opinion of the Anglo-Saxon role in the Conquest varies widely even after the passage of over one thousand years. Therefore, many historians and laymen alike view the Normans as culturally and militarily superior to the Anglo-Saxons, and these qualities were needed by England at the time of the Norman Conquest. For example, Brigadier C.N. Barclay who, in his 1966 book *Battle 1066* posits that the Anglo-Saxons were in danger of being overtaken by the Scandinavians and were incapable of ruling themselves successfully.¹³ Barclay claims that the Normans were energetic and intelligent while the Anglo-Saxons were lethargic and unintelligent, and William the Bastard, earl of Normandy, was the saving grace of England because he was able to unify the country. The author's aspersions against the Anglo-Saxons and the events surrounding 1066 provide examples of the lingering biases against the Anglo-Saxons in the present day. These assertions are based on writings of Norman revisionists, which have managed to linger in the form of anti-Anglo-Saxon sentiments in the post-modern mind.¹⁴ By assessing Tostig's role in English government pre-conquest, it

¹² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 544.

¹³ Barclay was not an academic historian, but he had extensive military experience. He wrote his book due to his fascination with the subject.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 544. Frank Stenton explains that others believe the Anglo-Saxon system was evolving well despite the lackluster rules of Æthelred ('Unred') and Edward the Confessor and would have continued to flourish without

will be made evident that he was far from lethargic and unintelligent; and, therefore, the post-Conquest destruction of Earl Tostig's character was unwarranted.

Historiography

The most information we have about Edward's most powerful earls, Harold and Tostig Godwineson, are found in three versions of *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle* as well as the *Vita Aedwardi Regis*.¹⁵ We do not know exactly what Tostig's personality was like, but it is possible to make inferences based the information provided as well as what is left out. For instance, the introduction of the *Vita* is missing. This lost section is perhaps the crucial description of Tostig and his siblings that we do not have.¹⁶ Because of this, much is still unknown about the Godwines.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle exists in multiple editions and three mention Edward's reign in a continual fashion: The C, D, and E versions discuss this period, although frustratingly, from both similar and sometimes dissimilar points of view. The C, while partly written during Edward's lifetime, breaks twice before the rest was completed following the Battle of Hastings.¹⁷

Norman intervention. For example, Æthelred's reign was fraught with poor judgement and assumptions. Edward the Confessor was not a weak king, but he lacked the stamina to rule authoritatively. Most of the major military achievements were accomplished during his reign are owed to his *thegns*: Godwine, Leofric, Siward, Harold, and Tostig. (Harold Harefoot and Harthacnut can be included in this list as well. Harold Harefoot's and his half-brother Harthacnut's reigns were both short and relatively unproductive- they were of Danish decent through Cnut.) *For a more in depth history of Edward, see Harriet O'Brien's Queen Emma and the Vikings: The Woman Who Shaped the Events of 1066.* Bloomsbury, 2006.

¹⁵ *Vita AEdwardi Regis, The Life of King Edward.* (1962). (Barlow, F. Ed. and Trans.) *Medieval Text Series* (V. H. Galbraith, R.A.B. Mynors, and C.N.L. Brooke, Ed.). New York: Thomas Nelson and Sons. *Hereafter, the Vita.*

¹⁶ Mortimer, R. (2009). *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend.* Boydell & Brewer. p. 16. *Hereafter, The Man and the Legend.*

¹⁷ Baxter, S. (2007). MS C of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the politics of mid-eleventh-century England. *The English Historical Review.* Vol. 122, No. 499, pp. 1189-1227. *Hereafter, 'The Politics'.* This version discusses this time period from an arguably Mercian perspective based on its most likely date and authorship.

This version heavily favors the Mercian perspective and was most likely written in the Midlands.¹⁸ Chronicle D appears to have been written in the latter half of the eleventh-century with narratives regarding the Midlands and the North.¹⁹ The E version derives from a manuscript facsimile completed in 1120. It is believed that this version was created in Kent based on the authors' knowledge of local ecclesiastical matters.²⁰

The *Vita Ædwardi Regis*, a manuscript written about the reign of King Edward, is troublesome because it is subjective but provides a unique insight into the lives of those close to Edward the Confessor. The manuscript is divided into two parts with each section of prose separated by poems. While meant to be a biography of Edward, much of the author's focus is on Earl Godwine of Wessex and his progeny. Richard Mortimer points out in his book *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend* that the first part is almost solely focused on the triumphs of the house of Godwine, while the second part is devoted to the King's religious achievements.²¹ One reason for its focus on Godwine and his children is owed to its patron, Queen Edith Godwineson; therefore, the focus of the prose revolves around the achievements of her family.²² Most likely written after Edward's death, the latter half of the *Vita* seeks to compare his life to a

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 1215.

¹⁹ ASC D, xxxix-lv. *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, Worcester manuscript: (D) 1065. (1961). (Whitelock, D. Ed. and Trans.).

²⁰ Baxter, 'The Politics', pp. 1189-1227.

²¹ Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, p. 14.

²² Licence, T. (2016). The Date and Authorship of the *Vita Ædwardi regis*. *Anglo-Saxon England*. (Vol. 47). Cambridge University Press, p. 216; *Hereafter, Date and Authorship*. See also, *The Life of Edward*, (Barlow), pp. 46-9; the manuscript consistently praises both brothers. For instance, the author describes Tostig as 'a man of courage, endowed with a great shrewdness of mind', and writes of Harold that, 'He wielded his father's powers even more actively, and walked in his ways of patience and mercy'.

saint.²³ In addition, its silence on particular topics allows for suppositions to be made regarding the subject's motives and character. While many events in Edward's reign are discussed, several of the political conflicts involving the Godwines are explained differently than in other sources, such as *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.²⁴

The writings of Churchmen also provide important historical records of the Church and local communities. John of Worcester, Symeon of Durham, and Henry of Huntingdon, for example, wrote ecclesiastical versions of the events of the 1060s from their twelfth century perspectives using both contemporary and near-contemporary accounts. One work, *The Chronicle of Henry of Huntingdon*, provides insight into the people and events of the time. In addition, John of Worcester's *Chronicon ex Chronicis* is an account of 1065 written from the Anglo-Saxon perspective. It has been suggested that the author consulted a lost copy of *The*

²³ Following the deaths of Edward, Harold, and Tostig in 1066, the author shifted focus of the manuscript and focused on forming an image of Edward in a pious light, most likely to push his bid for his canonization.

²⁴ Stephen Baxter references one example of such an omission revolves around Edward's path to the throne of England. The *Vita* proudly asserts that Edward's ascension to the throne was the result of Godwine's diplomacy. (Baxter, 'The Politics', pp. 1199-1200); while Godwine did support Edward, the *Vita's* author glazed over some of the otherwise known and darker preceding events, perhaps to ensure that Godwine's reputation remained positive and not marred by past events, regardless of validity; alternatively, William of Jumiege, a French contemporary, wrote of Godwine's treacherous capture and subsequent murder of King Æthelred's son, Alfred. Jumiege holds Godwine directly responsible for this death, and portrays Godwine as a vicious tyrant with subversive motives. William of Jumieges, Robert Torigni, and Orderic Vitalis. *Gesta Normannorum Ducum of Williams of Jumieges, Orderic Vitalis, and Robert of Torigni*. 2 vols. Translated by Elisabeth C.M. van Houts. Vol 2: Books V-VIII. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995; Frank Stenton clarifies in his book *Anglo-Saxon England* that the murder happened after Arthur was removed from Godwine's custody. Additionally, the C version of *The Chronicle* does not specifically name Godwine, but it does 'assign him a preeminent role in the events which led to his [Alfred's] death' (Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 421). Stenton gives a detailed account of the fate of Arthur, son of Æthelred: 'Godwine, who had clearly joined Harold's [Harefoot] party by this date, was one of these magnates, and probably their leader. He arrested Alfred, dispersed his followers, and put some to death. Alfred himself was afterwards taken on board ship out of Godwine's custody, savagely blinded, and brought to Ely, where he soon died of his injuries'; while Arthur's death in 1036 led to Edward's eventual ascension to the throne, Edward harbored resentment against Godwine for his brother's murder long after he became king; David Bates explains in his book *William the Conqueror* that the *Vita's* author referenced this event as method by which archbishop Robert of Jumiege turned Edward against Godwine. Additionally, William of Malmesbury writes that Godwine's collapse and subsequent death at the king's court was, 'instant divine punishment for a mendacious avowal of innocence' (p.111); regardless of the truth, this instance explains why certain unsavory or controversial events were left out of the *Vita*.

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle as a source.²⁵ Henry of Huntingdon, like John of Worcester, expresses an amicable yet pragmatic view of the Anglo-Saxons.²⁶ The monk Symeon of Durham wrote his account of Edward's reign, *Historia Regum*, using a copy of John of Worcester's work.²⁷ While these works provide valuable insight, it is difficult to verify many details and some claims are based on false accounts made by post-Conquest revisionist historians.

Similarly, Scandinavian sources about the events of 1066 are difficult to trust and lack reliability. One such work is Snorri Sturlson's *Heimskringla* (*King Harald's Saga*), a biography of Harald Siggurdson ('Hardrada'), is an amalgamation of three sagas written in Old Norse. Sturlson's unique Icelandic perspective provides details of Harold Godwinson's personality as well as his relationship with Tostig. The saga was written during a period of Icelandic history not unlike the English events of 1065-66 where, 'The dark forces of self-destruction had gotten out of hand and the state was doomed'.²⁸

Much of what we think we know about Edward's reign was influenced by pro-Norman authors writing in the decades following the Conquest. Because the Anglo-Saxons were forced into submission by the new regime, it became very important for the surviving English thegns to quickly assimilate to the new culture. Historian Robert Bartlett describes this rapid change as the

²⁵ The early accounts reference the *Historia novorum* written by Eadmer of Canterbury, which was completed between 1121 – 1124.

²⁶ Two editions of Henry's work are referenced in this dissertation: Henry of Huntingdon. *The Chronicles of Henry of Huntingdon*. (1853). (H. G. Bohn, H. G., Ed. and Trans.) p. 206; and Henry of Huntingdon. *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*. (1996). (Greenway, D., Ed.).

²⁷ Two editions of Symeon's work are referenced in this dissertation: Symeon of Durham. *Historia regum*. (1882-5). (Arnold, T., Ed.) 2 Vols. London: Rolls Series; and Symeon of Durham. (2012). *Symeonis monachi opera omnia: Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*. (Vol. I). Cambridge University Press. pp. 94-5.

²⁸ Mortimer, R. (2009). *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend*. Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, p. 18. Hereafter, *The Man and the Legend*.

‘swiftest and most thorough replacement of one ruling class by another in English history’.²⁹ One impact of the invasion was the wave of Norman literature, which was disseminated throughout England. As a result of this phenomenon, R.H.C. Davis explains that Englishmen should expect a ‘conscious building up of the Norman reputation by later historians...’.³⁰ Additionally, Richard Mortimer posits in his book *Edward the Confessor: the Man and the Legend* that Edward’s reign enjoyed both ‘fortune and misfortune’ as a result of the Conquest.³¹ He supports this opinion by noting that the propaganda subsequently written about 1066 has clouded the real Edward and those close to him. On the other hand, the late King became the saintly figure ‘Edward the Confessor’ due to the projected image as a pious, diplomatic, and peaceful king.³² In the twentieth century, H.R. Loyn explains in his 1986 article ‘The Norman Conquest’ that the 900th anniversary of the Battle of Hastings caused a resurgence in pro-Norman historical scholarship.³³

The flood of new pro-Conquest literature reinforced old stereotypes and biases first introduced as a way support the new regime. Because of the endeavors of Norman and later Anglo-Norman writers, Edward and the Godwinesons currently exist in dual realms: one of legend and myth, and one as historical figures. These contrasting details have made it difficult to disconnect the fiction from fact.³⁴

²⁹ Bartlett, R. (2010). 1066 and All That: How the Normans Shaped Britain. *The Telegraph*. Telegraph Media.

³⁰ Loyn, H.R. (1986). The Norman Conquest. *History Today*. (Vol. 36). pp. 51-53. Davis writes that the works of Odericus Vitalis is one example of such writing.

³¹ Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, p. 1.

³² Ibid., p. 1. Mortimer also writes, ‘The biographical approach which is our best hope will have its own distortions – kings are not necessarily the prime movers, nor is a society simply the sum of the individuals in it. Sanctity will add a further layer of mystery: his sanctity can only be in the minds of beholders whose views have come down to us’.

³³ Ibid., p. 51. Mortimer notes that E.A. Freeman, F.W. Maitland, and J.H. Round are among such authors.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 1.

History of Northumbria

A brief history of Northumbria will provide the context needed for understanding the region's unique internal structure of law and order. In the Early Medieval Period, the territory of Northumbria was made up of two separate kingdoms, Bernicia and Deira.³⁵ The former along the northern coast and the latter in the southern portion. These two kingdoms eventually become the single territory of Northumbria when Æthelfrith, king of Bernicia, annexed Deira in the late-sixth-century (See Figure 1). This began a deep-rooted feud between Æthelfrith's dynasty and the ousted royal family of Deira, causing future conflicts over land and power. Over the subsequent years, the size of the kingdom's territory waxed and waned as hegemonic conflicts with neighboring kingdoms, such as Mercia, continued. During the height of its power, Northumbria's wealth and influence surpassed those of contemporary kingdoms. Throughout its history the kingdom remained undoubtedly distinct from the rest of England. The uniqueness of the kingdom is important while identifying the challenges faced by Tostig Godwineson when he became the earl of Northumbria in 1055.

Northumbria's landscape also contributed to the region's uniqueness. William Kapelle observes in *The Norman Conquest of the North* that prior to the Norman Conquest the northern people were hardly analogous. One could observe these differences in both the geography of the kingdom and the ethnicity of its people.³⁶ The landscape of Northumbria differs dramatically from coast to coast and along its northern and southern boundaries. The central vertical strip of land between the east and west coast plains was virtually uninhabited in the High Medieval

³⁵ From the English perspective, the Early Medieval Period began with the evacuation of Rome from Britain, and the High Medieval Period began in 1000 and ended in 1250 C.E.

³⁶ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 7.

Period due to sparse arable land and lack of direct lines of communication between the coasts.³⁷ Additionally, this belt of land was categorically dangerous as it was largely populated with predatory animals, such as wolves, as well as men banished from society, known as outlaws.³⁸ Its remoteness allowed for many western villages to hold on to distinctive bucolic customs and practices. For example, Southerners travelling to the region would find it difficult to understand the native patois of the Northumbrians. Furthermore, partly due to the inability to successfully cultivate these lands, Northumbrians enjoyed a lower tax rate than their southern contemporaries.³⁹

England's centralized government began in Wessex and was considered an abnormality in the Early and High Medieval Periods by most continental nations. The kingdom was protected by the shire levies, or *fyrds*, which consisted of local, able-bodied men who could be called upon by the lords of the region in order to support the king's cause.⁴⁰ This system began with Alfred, king of Wessex, in the late-ninth-century as a reaction to consistent Viking attacks. The structure of government became more centralized as a result of the waves of Viking invasions. This aided

³⁷ The High Medieval Period was from about 1000-1250 C.E. During this period the area was sparsely populated and thus subject to foreign exploitation.

³⁸ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 9-10. The River Humber is understood to mark the border between the North and South.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 9-10. As England formed, Northumbria remained an independent kingdom, free of West Saxon influence until the waves of Danish invasions began in the ninth century. In the face of foreign invasion, however, the kingdom remained split as several noble families continued the multi-generational struggle for power. This division prevented the kings of Northumbria from creating a coalition of forces strong enough to defend against the Danish forces. As a result, the kingdom collapsed when York fell to the Danes and the region succumbed to foreign rule. However, the people living north of the Tyne were able to maintain independence from the conquerors of the southern region. Due to this split, the two regions within the old kingdom became known as Northumbria to the north and Yorkshire to the south.

⁴⁰ Kapelle, W. (1979). *The Norman Conquest of the North: The Region and its Transformation, 1000-1135*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 7-8.

in keeping the country from being conquered by Scandanavian invaders, such as Guthrum and Halfdan in the ninth century.⁴¹ However, the northern and eastern territories were unable to withstand the Viking pressure.

The once powerful Northumbrian military was staggeringly weak after the Danish invasion and subsequent capitulation of York in the ninth century. This impuissance offered a chance for the Strathclyde Britons to take control over the Southern Highlands and Cumberland and for the Scots to claim portions of Lothian and Tweeddale.⁴² Additionally, the widespread assimilation of Scandinavian customs and culture in York transformed much of the region's distinctiveness.⁴³ In the mid-tenth-century, the Norse replaced the Danes in York and established their own kingdom. Then, after nearly a century of continued political instability, Æthelstan ('the Glorious'), the West Saxon king, managed to annex Northumbria and York in 954.⁴⁴ It would be just over 100 years until the Normans would defeat Harold Godwineson at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the intricacies of the region during Tostig Godwineson's reign as earl of Northumbria. To do this, William Kapelle notes that one must

⁴¹ Guthrum was a Danish war leader who arrived on the shores of Britain in 871 as part of the 'Great Summer Army' and later joined the 'Great Heathen Army.' Guthrum eventually submitted to Alfred, king of Wessex, and became the earl of East Anglia. Halfdan Ragnarsson (Old Englusg: Halfdene or Healfdene) lead the 'Great Heathen Army' and invaded Britain in 865. Halfdan is said to be one of the sons of the famous Ragnar Lodbrok. He posed a serious threat to the Anglo-Saxon hegemonies but died in Ireland in 877. *For further reading on this topic, see Ashley, M. The Mammoth Book of British Kings and Queens.* Little, Brown Book Group, 2012.

⁴² Wilson, P.A. (1966). The terms 'Strathclyde' and 'Cumbria'. *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmoreland Antiquarian and Archaeological.* Series 2, Vol. 66, pp. 73-74.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 9-11. Alternatively, Northumbria (the area between the Tweed and the Tees) had retained its Anglo-Saxon traditions.

⁴⁴ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 9-10; King Æthelstan lived from 893/4-939 C.E. He was the son of Edward the Elder and grandson of Alfred the Great. Many scholars and historians consider him to be the first king of England.

‘measure the ratio of success’ to that of failure regarding the establishment of English rule in the region during Edward the Confessor’s reign .⁴⁵

Bringing the North into the fold of English culture would prove a daunting task. According to Kapelle, the period of Danish Kings and the political crises of Edward the Confessor ‘probably retarded unification’ of the North.⁴⁶ During the early-eleventh-century, the surviving Anglo-Saxon houses in Northumbria were left to establish some sort of peace with the Scandinavians to the south as their shadow loomed ever larger over England. This powerful Northumbrian family supported Æthelred, king of England, most likely due to their isolated position between the Scots to the north and Scandinavians to the south. Uhtred the Bold, earl of Northumbria, and other northern nobles failed to broker a lasting peace with the Danes of York, and, in 1016, the dynasty suffered greatly for its loyalty. Earl Uhtred and a number of his followers were ambushed and killed by King Cnut’s constituent, Thurbrand – despite the fact that Uhtred had been promised safe passage by Cnut.⁴⁷ Buttressed against this inherent instability, the feud between Gospatric, kinsman of Earl Uhtred, and Earl Tostig added to the tensions in the North between 1055 and 1065. By 1064 the blood feud between the house of Bamburgh and the Danish nobles continued to chip away at the foundation of the earldom. Therefore, the house of Bamburgh’s role in northern politics is an important factor in relation to the ongoing instability of the North in the mid-eleventh-century.

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 10. This is due to Danish exploitation of the overall disunity of the kingdom during the invasion period.

⁴⁷ *De Obsessione Dunelmi, On the Siege of Durham*. Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 139, p. 218.

Despite Wessex's large sphere of influence, its relationship with Northumbria and York remained insecure. In addition to the disunity created by the Viking occupations of York and the subsequent dynastic feuds, the laissez faire style of Edward's governance in the North further compounded friction between the region and the rest of England.⁴⁸ This is evident in the fact that King Edward held nominal lands in Yorkshire and never visited the area. William Kapelle notes that prior to the Conquest, the land beyond the Tees was unshired and no royal mints operated in the region⁴⁹; there were also no royal estates or burhs.⁵⁰ Additionally, no extant royal writs or charters from the area exist, therefore, the supposition is that kings lacked the power to write or enforce them.⁵¹ For this reason, southern nobles did not often travel to the northern region. This perpetuated an ancient tradition of English xenophobia that prevailed throughout the kingdom.

Importantly, Edward did not consistently possess the power to make church appointments above the River Tees.⁵² Frank Barlow explains in *The Anglo-Saxon Church: 1000-1066* that the bishop was most likely chosen by the clerks of the Church, who possessed this power until Earl Siward took control, most likely in the early 1030s. Barlow writes, 'No king chose a bishop until Siward became earl. Furthermore, the appointment of the Bishop of Durham appears to have lain more with Siward than with the king'.⁵³ Based on this evidence it is clear that little progress had

⁴⁸ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 12-13. While Wessex underwent a boom in political and economic power in the ninth and tenth centuries, the old royal families of the North continued to quarrel amongst themselves and the economy suffered as a result.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 12-13. Kapelle explains that the 'land beyond the Tees' is considered Northumbria.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 12-13.

⁵¹ Sawyer, P.H. and John, E. (1968). *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an annotated list and biography. Guides and Handbooks*. London: Royal Historical Society, p. 8.

⁵² This refers to the land north of the River Tees, which is considered Northumbrian territory. See, William Kapelle's book *The Norman Conquest of the North* for more information on the geography of medieval England.

⁵³ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 13; see also, Barlow, *The English Church: 1000-1066*.

been made between 954 and 1055 to fully unite England both governmentally and culturally. Thus, the weak influence of the South over northern politics created a barrier for Earl Tostig to successfully implement any native customs.

A disconnect remains regarding the integrity of the Godwines in regards to their direct involvement in governmental policy and action between 1050-1066. Although Tostig Godwineson is largely viewed as a vicious, grasping aristocrat in the modern scholarly mind, there is evidence to suggest these negative views are actually based on biased attitudes perpetuated by Merican and Norman authors following the Conquest. Modern historians have approached this topic in varying ways, thus producing differing results.⁵⁴ However, defining individual motivation and intention based on the extant material is a daunting task considering Northumbria's complicated history. Therefore, in order to assess the reasons for the revolt of 1065, one must incorporate the influence of Northumbria itself in relation to the successes and failures of Earl Tostig. By doing this, his overall image will be more balanced and comprehensive; and any misrepresentations or falsities regarding his integrity or mode of governance will be exposed.

⁵⁴ For example, William Kapelle's 1979 work *The Norman Conquest of the North* is a comprehensive history of the region in the years leading to the Conquest. The author provides a unique historical narrative based on political, historical, and geographical evidence gathered from various historical texts. The author does not, however, dissect the motivations of the authors in order to study the possible cultural impact of the proliferation of their interpretations of history. Alternatively, Marc Morris's 2012 history, *The Norman Conquest*, focuses on the years bookending the Battle of Hastings in order to provide context for the impact of the Normans on England. Morris extrapolates a narrative from the extant contemporary sources in order to interpret the motivations of those involved. In addition, historian Frank Barlow's work largely supports the actions of Edward during his reign and provides an overall positive view of the Anglo-Saxons. See, *The Life of King Edward who Rests at Westminster*.

CHAPTER TWO

Tostig's Appointment and the Expectations of Medieval Lordship

Upon the death of Earl Siward of Northumbria in 1055, Tostig took control of the earldom at Edward's bequest. Siward, nicknamed Digri ('the Strong') by King Cnut, lost his eldest son and heir on military campaign in Scotland hunting down King MacBeth, leaving his youngest son Waltheof next in line for the earldom; however, Waltheof was much too young to rule at the time of Siward's death, which left a dangerous power vacuum in the North.⁵⁵ King Edward understood the danger of an unstable Northumbria and purposefully selected Tostig for the role;⁵⁶ for he is described in the *Vita* as brave, strong, and equally handsome as his elder brother.⁵⁷ This description reflects Tostig's credentials for the earldom. Critically, unlike Earl Siward who had no blood ties to Northumbria, Tostig was raised in the customs of both Danish and English households and spoke both languages.⁵⁸ But he was a southerner (or *extraneous*), and this hindered a smooth transition of power.⁵⁹

Tostig's Appointment

Tostig's appointment to the northern earldom in light of its customs, politics, and disunity is interesting in and of itself. As brother to Harold, earl of Wessex, and of the queen, Tostig's

⁵⁵ Waltheof would not forget about his birthright and would endeavor to reclaim his rights once he was older.

⁵⁶ *Vita*, p. 48.

⁵⁷ The author is referring to Harold Godwineson.

⁵⁸ Tostig Godwineson: The Critical Years- a test of will. (2012). Lancaster, A. *Hubpages*. <https://www.discover.hubpages.com/education>. This is also important when considering the xenophobic nature of medieval English society.

⁵⁹ *Extraneous* is a term referring to someone who is foreign.

elevation appears to have positioned the Godwines above the kin of Earl Leofric. Furthermore, Tostig's ongoing feud with Leofric's son Ælfgar did not aid in the smoothness of this transition, except for the fact that the impulsive Ælfgar was exiled at the time. For this reason, William Kapelle makes the point that Tostig's placement in the North was probably, 'devoid –at least initially- of any other significance'.⁶⁰ However, Tostig should not be discounted based on the nepotistic system by which he was appointed. As the lord of many productive properties, he possessed a formidable amount of wealth and influence in his own right. This financial stability allowed for certain protections in the North, even as an outlander. For instance, he was able to procure and maintain a personal army with a core group of specialized soldiers called *huscarls* as well as traditional soldiers.

The appointment of Tostig to the earldom also begs the question of motive. This could have simply been King Edward's attempt to homogenize English government by placing a close ally in a position of power in the North.⁶¹ In addition, choosing a descendent of the northern house of Bamburgh would likely weaken the already frail relationship between the King and the northern nobles.⁶² Conversely, William Aird posits, 'His [Tostig's] acquisition of the earldom seems to have been another step in the aggrandizement of the Godwin family rather than attempt by Edward to integrate the region more fully into the kingdom'.⁶³ It is also plausible that the choice of Tostig resulted from the old tradition of placing younger siblings of powerful families

⁴⁸ Ibid., 'Tostig Godwineson: The Critical Years – a test of will'.

⁶¹ Edward's military strength in Britain was owed largely to the Godwines.

⁶² Gospatric, kin to the slain Earl Uhtred the Bold, would have been in line to the earldom.

⁶³ Aird, W. (1998). *St. Cuthbert and the Normans: The Church of Durham, 1071-1153*. Suffolk: Boydell Press. p. 54.

in specific earldoms. In this case, Northumbria was following in the dynastic tradition of the Midlands and East Anglia.⁶⁴ Evidence of this is notable because Edward placed Gyrth Godwineson, younger brother of Harold and Tostig, as the earl of East Anglia (former territory of Ælfgar of Mercia). However, this appointment perpetuated a feud between the house of Leofric and the Godwinesons that would have severe consequences for Tostig.

Expectations of Lordship in the High Medieval Period

Many of the criticisms of Tostig's governance of Northumbria revolve around his implementation of southern laws and his use of violence; therefore, a brief overview of the expectations of Anglo-Saxon leadership will provide the context necessary to understand the contemporary expectations of Earl Tostig. Anglo-Saxon society was structured in a way in which power trickled down from the top to the bottom of the social hierarchy. Kings gifted land, money, and positions of power to those who served him. This process of patronage ensured that the earls and thegns who served the king owed him their livelihood. This structure allowed for bestowed privileges and rights to directly reflect one's power and scope of influence. Therefore, the more land possessed by a noble, the higher his position in the hierarchy would be.⁶⁵ One contemporaneous example of the importance of land ownership is Tostig's father Godwine, earl of Wessex. His vast wealth and immense power allowed him to rule his earldom with great authority and influence that even rivaled King Edward. In his book *The Norman Conquest*, Marc

⁴⁰ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 88.

⁶⁵ Verber, Eric. (1981). Earls, Their New Role in England: a case study of the function and development of the English earl into Frankish feudalism. Master's Thesis. University of Rhode Island. pp. 6-8. The author stresses the importance of land holding and one's power in Anglo-Saxon society.

Morris explains that, 'His lands, as great as they were, could not quite rival those of the king; but in terms of lordship, the earl greatly outclassed Edward'.⁶⁶

Military success was also an expectation of rulers in the medieval period. According to J. Nelson's article, 'Violence in the Carolingian World and the Ritualization of Ninth-Century Warfare', the violent and often devastating battles between the heptarchy in the Early Middle Ages were considered an acceptable form of governance. Additionally, the brutality of these conflicts was considered perfectly ethical in the eyes of the Church.⁶⁷ In fact, medieval rulers who were both pious and militarily successful were considered the epitome of good governance. Historian David Crouch writes, 'Secular rulers and magnates employed naked violence in furtherance of their aims'.⁶⁸ Offa of Mercia (d. 796), for example, ruled as king of the Midland territory and as over-king of most of South East England. Through intimidation and violence, Offa was able to secure the succession for his son while maintaining his vast territory. In order to do so, Offa hunted down and killed any rival claimants to the throne; he also had Æthelbert II, king of East Anglia, beheaded.⁶⁹ Notably, it was not until after the Conquest that an organized effort was made by the Crown to restrict the power of the magnates in favor of the monarch. In contrast to the Anglo-Saxons, Davis Crouch writes in his work *English Aristocracy*, 'The

⁶⁶ Morris, *The Norman Conquest*, pp. 63-4.

⁶⁷ Nelson, J. (1998). Violence in the Carolingian World and the Ritualization of Ninth-Century Warfare. *Violence and Society*. pp. 90-107.

⁶⁸ Crouch, D. (2011). *The English Aristocracy, 1070-1272: A Social Transformation*. Yale University Press. p. 101. Hereafter, *The English Aristocracy*.

⁶⁹ It is likely that Offa had this sub-king killed for an act of sedition.

Norman characteristic of rule involved an 'increase in civil peace and royal control of the legal process'.⁷⁰

In addition to maintaining large amounts of land and demonstrating influence, an earl's ability to both protect his lands and provide martial service to his king was of upmost importance in the medieval period; subsequently, those who held lands of strategic value were inherently more powerful than those who did not.⁷¹ With defense often comes violence. As G. Halsall explains in his article 'Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West', warfare, conflict, and violence were commonplace during this period. The form and function of violence in England directly correlates with the process of governance.⁷² For instance, preceding Anglo-Saxon kings, such as Alfred 'the Great' and his son Edward 'the Elder', are examples of warlike kings whose success in battle was of upmost importance for the survival of their kingdoms prior to year 1000.⁷³ Alfred was incredibly pious, administratively successful, and militarily resolute; the sobriquet 'the Great' is a result of his devout patronage of the Church as well as his staunch protection of his realm. As a result of his reforms of the military system of Wessex, the Vikings

⁷⁰ Crouch, *The English Aristocracy*, p. 101. The author adds evidence from within Northumbria following the Conquest: 'To use naked violence within England was dangerous for a magnate, and Earl Robert de Mowbray of Northumbria was subject to the same decisive treatment when he defied King William Rufus in 1095'. He then adds a reference from the 13th century, 'In England as much as France one can detect that individual aristocrats felt driven to draw swords to resolve arguments, to the point where they became what we would call lawless brigands'.

⁷¹ For example, Earl Godwine possessed the lands of Wessex, which was defensively important due to its proximity to the Frankish coast.

⁷² Halsall, G. (1999). Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West. *Speculum*. Vol. 74, No. 1.

⁷³ Violence in early medieval England has attracted considerable scholarly attention in the last few decades, in addition to its popularity in films. See the collection of essays edited by G. Halsall, 'Violence and Society in the Early Medieval West'.

‘received a rather warmer welcome in the later stages of his reign than they had done hitherto’.⁷⁴ Furthermore, M.K. Lawson writes in *Battle of Hastings: 1066* that Alfred’s son Edward is credited with some of the most impressive campaigns recorded in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* by subduing East Anglia and Mercia in a reign bookended by Viking invasions.⁷⁵ Additionally, medieval governorship required ‘the acquisition and attainder of justice; however, only in-so-far-as was palatable to the nobles’.⁷⁶ However, most Englishmen living and working in rural communities at this time would have no relationship with their earl on an individual level. It was often rival nobles who took offense to each other’s actions, especially when one had land or power to gain from another’s downfall.

Earl Tostig was considered austere and his policies laborious and these accusations inhibited him from building relationships with the northern thegns. Tom Licence suggests that Tostig was more like Robert of Jumièges, the French archbishop of Canterbury, in his ‘zeal to combat his enemies’.⁷⁷ However, the Earl’s strict methods were in line with the culture of his era. Therefore, the vendetta against him was most likely personal in nature. On this, Simon Shama expresses in his work *A History of Britain: At the edge of the world?*, ‘Worse than being

⁷⁴ Lawson, M.K. (2003). *The Battle of Hastings, 1066*. Gloucestershire: Tempus Publishing. p. 127; Alfred’s top down approach to reform affected all West Saxons, from the *ealdormen* to the peasant farmers; *Ealdorman* – a man of high status in the early Medieval period. Similar to later earls and land magnates in the High Middle Ages.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 88.

⁷⁷ Licence, T. (2020). *Edward the Confessor: The Last of the Royal Blood*. Cambridge: Yale University Press. p. 214. *Hereafter, Edward the Confessor*. Robert of Jumièges was the first Norman archbishop of Canterbury. He did not see eye to eye with Earl Godwine. Additionally, Robert of Jumièges was an old ally of Edward. However, his appointment did not last long and he went back to France after about eighteen months; Tom Licence explains that while Tostig was zealous in his defense of the law, Harold was more like Godwin due to his ‘amiable and dependable’ nature. In addition, Edward may have liked Tostig’s attitude toward strict governance because it allowed him to relieve himself of those unpleasant matters.

a bully was being an impotent bully'.⁷⁸ As a southern-born noble, Tostig's intrinsic mode of governance did not mix well with the local thegns' expectations of rule in the North. Therefore, it is likely the northern nobles viewed the Earl as a bully or at least unpalatable.⁷⁹ As a result, Tostig's reputation is that of a violent and intolerant governor.

The long and complicated history of the North made it difficult for the pious and conservative Tostig to successfully govern. Because of this, Tostig was criticized for his policies and practices regarding the Church and taxes and laws, as well as the northern border; and these criticisms perpetuated a tradition of ignominy following the Conquest that bled into scholarly work. It is necessary, therefore, to study this period in order to reevaluate Tostig's character. This dissertation will attempt to answer why his reputation is worse than both his contemporaries and his forebears. To do this, we must look at Earl Tostig on his own terms, without modern biases.

⁷⁸ Schama, S. (2000). *The History of Britain: at the edge of the world? 3000 BC-AD 1603*. New York: Library of Congress Press. p. 88.

⁷⁹ If the thegns saw Earl Tostig as weak, that would certainly have bolstered their reasons for a rebellion.

CHAPTER THREE

A Controversial Rule

One abiding protestation of Tostig Godwineson's governance is his soured relationship with the clerks of the Church at Durham. According to many contemporary sources, the relationship failed in response to the Earl's unscrupulous dealings in ecclesiastic matters. For this reason, it has been argued by scholars that this failed relationship directly affected Tostig's position due to the Church's overt proclamations against him. The aim of this chapter is to investigate the Church's relationship with Earl Tostig in order to assess its role in the precipitating events of the revolt of 1065. In addition, by using the extant contemporary texts to deconstruct the latent criticism of his political policies and foreign affairs, I will formulate a realistic outline of events based on modern methodology and scholarship. In addition, this chapter will examine Tostig's relationship with his northern cohorts and the impact of these relationships, as well as investigate the differing opinions of contemporary writers regarding the Earl's affairs with King Malcolm of Scotland. In doing so, this chapter will provide context for this dissertation's assessment of the factors that caused instability in the earldom, which lead to revolt.

The Church

The C version of *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* has directly contributed to the negative perception of Tostig's relationship with the Church at Durham. The C explains that Tostig made a fatal error in that he 'robbed God first'.⁸⁰ These words can be interpreted as an accusation that Tostig stole from the Church or unfairly taxed the ecclesiastic institutions in the north.

⁸⁰ Baxter, 'The Politics', pp. 1189-1227.

Understanding that the C was composed in Mercia, this accusation is most likely a hyperbolic misrepresentation of the facts in order to discredit Tostig's pious reputation.

Although Tostig and his wife Judith were devout patrons of St. Cuthbert and served as benefactors to the church at Durham, it is possible that the earl irked clerics due to his involvement in guiding the northern bishopric.⁸¹ For example, early in his tenure as earl, Tostig replaced the disliked bishop of Durham Æthelric with his even more unpopular brother, Æthelwine.⁸² Additionally, much of Earl Tostig's unpopularity is due to his alleged favoritism of Peterborough over Durham.⁸³ As a result, it is rumored that he became unpopular with the clerks of Durham. Tostig's relationship with Durham is important because it has been argued that, regardless of the Earl's authority and generosity, the men of St. Cuthbert were a catalysts of the rebellion of 1065.⁸⁴ One example relates to Durham acting as a symbol of Northumbrian solidarity, standing with the house of Bamburgh and men of York. One suggested method by which the men of St. Cuthbert showed their antipathy for Tostig's governance was by the

⁸¹ Barlow, *The Godwins*, p. 111. Barlow writes, 'Judith, a great admirer of St. Cuthbert, gave the church many ornaments, and promised even more...'

⁸² Symeon of Durham. (2012). *Symeonis monachi opera omnia: Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*. Vol. I. Cambridge University Press. pp. 94-5. Symeon explains that Æthelwine was later punished by William the Conqueror for these thefts; Æthelric was later accused of stealing from the Church.

⁸³ Baxter. S. (2007). MS C of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and *the Politics of Mid- Eleventh-Century England*. *The English Historical Review*. Vol. 122, No. 499, pp. 1189-1227. In keeping with these negative sentiments, a legend persists that Judith, his Flemish wife, felt maligned because she was not allowed to worship St. Cuthbert at his shrine. So, according to Symeon of Durham, she sent a maid to the shrine to 'try to whether the prohibition placed on her sex might be set at nought with impunity.' (Symeon of Durham, *Historia Dunelmensis Ecclesiae*, pp. 94-5). The maid was blown over by a strong wind, which provided Judith with an answer. As a result, she and her husband lavished the church with expensive gifts to appease St. Cuthbert. This legend portrays Edith as an entitled outsider, which is more fitting to that of her unpopular husband, but nonetheless shows how the couple was perceived by some members of the church.

⁸⁴ William Kapelle, *The Northern Conquest of the North*, p. 98. Kapelle makes one such accusation, writing that, 'The parallel between Cospatric and Oswin was obvious and the public display of Oswin's body at Durham was clearly an attempt by the clerks to incite their flock to revolt.'

exhumation of the body of King Oswine of Deira.⁸⁵ It has been theorized that this act was meant to be a representation of Christian martyrdom in response to the murder of three thegns from York for which Tostig was accused.⁸⁶ While the Church did make efforts to reestablish its political independence from the control of the Crown's men, its role in the rebellion itself is arguable.⁸⁷ William Aird concludes that the Church of St. Cuthbert did not incite any violence against Earl Tostig and the displaying of Oswine was more or less a statement against 'duplicitous' bishops. In fact, Tostig's presence offered protection and a means by which to accumulate wealth.⁸⁸ Importantly, evidence of the Church's respect for Tostig's position is still evident today. For example, his name was inscribed on the sundial in St. Gregory's Minster.⁸⁹ Interestingly, this was paid for by Orm Gamalsson, local landowner and the father of one of Tostig's future enemies, Gamel son of Orm.⁹⁰

While it does not appear that the Church played a direct role in the rebellion of 1065, complaints regarding Tostig's method of rule caused obstacles for the Earl. In the end, it is unlikely that Tostig actually 'robbed God' considering how he and his wife were often described

⁸⁵ Oswine was king of Deira until 651 C.E. He was venerated as a saint after being killed by rival king, Oswiu of Bernicia.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 58. William Aird examines the display of Oswine by the Church. He argues against this display as an act of defiance against Tostig for the murder of Gospatric, son of Uhtred the Bold. Instead Aird makes the point at the Church greatly benefitted from Tostig and Judith's generosity, and thus did not directly act against the earl. He writes, '...St. Cuthbert had been intimately involved with the political developments of Northumbria, occasionally embarking upon ill-fated policies, but, on the whole, coping expertly with the changing power structures in the region'.

⁸⁷ Aird, *St. Cuthbert*, p. 57.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 58.

⁸⁹ St. Gregory's Minster still stands today and is located in Kirkdale.

⁹⁰ He is also known as Gamal Ormsson, a Northumbrian thegn.

as generous and pious. The *Vita* gives the explanation that the couple are remembered for their love of the Church, and this sentiment is reiterated in the manuscripts of Durham Cathedral.⁹¹

Taxes and Laws

Following Siward's death in 1055, Tostig appeared to be the perfect successor, according to the *Vita*. But he did not do well in his initial governance of Northumbria largely due to his investiture of southern laws and customs upon the culturally different North. One such example is Tostig's repeal of the Laws of Cnut. This act caused him to appear tyrannical to the increasingly skeptical northern earls.⁹² For instance, when he raised the rate in 1063, it was highly unpopular among the northern thegns. According to John of Worcester, Tostig raised a 'huge tribute'.⁹³ This unprecedented move not only affected the peasant population but the nobles as well. This was a major issue because the region had uniquely enjoyed a lower tax rate for generations, and the nobles were unsurprisingly outraged by this affront. The tax hike was seen as a subversive method by which Earl Tostig could instill southern fiscal customs on the northerners.⁹⁴ Frank Stenton suggests that the rebellion of 1065 occurred partly due to Tostig's increase in taxes and describes the tax as 'taken from the Northumbrians'.⁹⁵ In the very least, the northern thegns who had previously supported Tostig began to be overburdened by the 'heavy

⁹¹ Morris, *The Norman Conquest*, pp. 122-23

⁹² King Cnut passed a series of laws during his reign, 1016-1035. Many of these lasted well past his death.

⁹³ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 96-7.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 96-7.

⁹⁵ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 578.

yoke' put on them.⁹⁶ However, these thegns did not overtly proclaim against Earl Tostig until nearly ten years after his appointment.

It is possible that this tax increase was a means by which Tostig could recoup spending on the Welsh campaign.⁹⁷ His assistance to Harold in Wales in 1062-3 did not aid in his popularity, for it only provided benefits for Tostig's household. Furthermore, his extended absences allowed his adversaries to gain supporters.⁹⁸ Alternatively, it is conceivable that Tostig needed these funds to maintain his private army of household men.⁹⁹ Regardless of motive, his economic policy changes had drastic impacts on the viability of profit from the agricultural communities in the region. The economic system in Northumbria was based on the traditional wealth extraction scheme of the medieval period; and tradition, in turn, is one of the enduring characteristics of Anglo-Saxon society.¹⁰⁰

The positive and negative effects of such a steadfast societal system is evident in its cultural norms and systems of the period, and the strength and importance of Anglo-Saxon

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 587. This is a reference to the tax burden enforced by the earl.

⁹⁷ John of Worcester, ii, p. 599. Tostig participated in the Welsh campaign with Harold. He also travelled to Rome with his wife, Judith.

⁹⁹ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 96-97.

¹⁰⁰ William Kapelle notes that the lower tax assessment most likely originated when the West Saxons brought the Norse kingdom under their control in the tenth century (*The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 260). The Viking Guthred's Yorkshire men proposed a revolt against Æthelstan because tribute had never been paid to a southern king before (*The Chronicle Attributed to John of Wallingford*, ed. Richard Vaughn, MW Books, 1958, p. 45; Guthred Hardacnutsson was earl of Northumbria from 883 until his death in 895.) For this reason, it is logical that a traditional tax rate would be too heavy of a burden for the newly annexed population. It is feasible that this tax system even preceded the Vikings and was part of an older Northumbrian system (Jolliffe, J.E.A. writes 'The Era of the Folk in English History', in *Oxford Essays in Medieval History*, presented to Herbert Edward Salter. viii. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1934, pp. 20-25). While this theory is most likely accurate, it has been proposed that Cnut regularized the fiscal system during his reign. (Stenton, F.M. *The Free Peasantry of the Northern Danelaw*. 1st edn., Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1960. pp. 86-90.)

traditions are evident in many different aspects of life. For example, tradition perpetuated xenophobic attitudes toward outsiders through the intrinsic fear and mistrust of strangers; also, tradition propagated the feudal and seigniorial systems in England. The latter is a key to the social and political standings of both nobles and church leaders. Sidney Painter describes this system in his book *Medieval Society* that the seigniorial system flourished following the Danish occupation of York and East Anglia, as well as the placement of Normans into roles of power by King Edward. This institution allowed for those in power to draw resources from the agricultural communities on their lands.¹⁰¹ Within the complicated structure of society were smaller, more complex systems to ensure the maximum extraction of wealth from the agricultural population centers.¹⁰² Therefore, Tostig's infringement on this delicate monitorial system of agricultural gains disrupted generations of exploitation by the landed nobility. Painter describes this system as a pattern in which specific sections of fields out of the total available arable lands was set aside for the lord. In exchange for the ability to work the land and some protections from their lord, the villagers dedicated about three working days a week to their lord's property.¹⁰³ Painter explains that these villages were the 'fundamental economic and social unit of rural life'.¹⁰⁴ In summary, this was a well-structured form of exploitation that maintained itself through a deep rooted sense of tradition.

¹⁰¹ Painter, S. (1951). *Medieval Society*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. pp. 50-51. The origin of this system remains unknown but theories suggest its roots began in large Roman estates worked by slaves or free German farmers working collective lands shared by a village.

¹⁰² Ibid., pp. 50-51.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp. 50-51. This included: tending to the lord's cows, sheep, and pigs; harvesting his crops; cutting his hay; and completing any other tasks asked of them. This system ensured that the villagers, although not slaves, were certainly considered unfree, as they also owed the lord rent in addition to obligated service. For example, food rent was owed to the lord depending on what was harvested.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 50-51. Food rent would include cheese if the villagers pastured their cows on his lands.

In addition to levying unprecedented and unpopular taxes, Earl Tostig also instilled strict laws and dutifully enforced them. Because the North was a historically dangerous area with large swaths of land devoid of governance, Tostig sought to eradicate these pockets of violence by catching the outlaws and punishing them for their crimes, often by killing them and then mutilating their bodies. The *Vita* explains that Earl Tostig was ‘a son and lover of divine justice’ and his actions meant to prove this to be true. Historian William Aird writes that Tostig’s ‘rule has been interpreted as being harsh although this might be a rather negative way of stating that it was effective’.¹⁰⁵ In contrast, Chronicle C explains that Tostig committed atrocities against ‘all those who were less powerful than himself’.¹⁰⁶ While the killing of criminals was hardly shocking to the medieval conscience, the truth must lie somewhere in between these differing accounts. The *Vita* makes an interesting acquiescence, noting that ‘more than a few’ northerners complained about his method of rule, and he was ‘accused of punishing disturbers more for the desire of their confiscated property than for the love of justice’.¹⁰⁷ The *Vita* is also careful to point out that here was an obvious need for strict justice in the region due to omnipresent violence. Interestingly, the northern nobles did not act against the Earl until 1065.

As earl of Northumbria, Tostig sought to correct this imbalance and bring law and order to the borderlands. However, his fervent pursuit of justice did not align with many of the northern thegns’ perception of traditional rule. While it appears that he was working toward stabilizing the system of justice, Tostig’s actions are described as tyrannical by many contemporary sources. For example, he outlawed the old Anglo-Saxon tradition of the blood

¹⁰⁵ Aird, *The Men of St. Cuthbert*, p. 56.

¹⁰⁶ MS. C. ed., O’Brien, O’Keefe, p. 118.

¹⁰⁷ *Vita*, pp. 48-9.

feud, or *wergild*, in which one could retaliate the death of a family member with the blood of an offending family member. This action was viewed as an unpopular infringement on the rights and culture of the Northumbrians. The northern thegns likely considered Tostig's new and drastic actions as a contravention of their method of rule, and the negative association with these political policies caused enmity with the local thegns. His unwelcomed policy making and law enforcement eventually lead to more serious accusations, which would have detrimental effects.

According to John of Worcester, when formal grievances against Tostig's policies were brought to him, the earl invited Gamel, son of Orm, and Ulf, son of Dolfinn, to York to discuss the matter in 1063. Worcester explains that they met privately in Tostig's chambers before he killed them.¹⁰⁸ John of Worcester adds that the thegns had been granted safe passage by the Earl. Notably, the author cites a lost annal as his source, and no extant manuscripts discuss this act.¹⁰⁹ Frank Stenton argues that one of the reasons for the rebellion of 1065 was the murder of 'certain thegns', likely referring to Gamel and Ulf.¹¹⁰ And Chronicle C describes how Tostig, 'Despoiled of life and land all those he had power over'. However, C is the only contemporary reference suggesting Tostig committed this double homicide.¹¹¹ In the very least, this began a blood feud (*wergild*) between Earl Tostig and the men of York. Florence of Worcester claims these murders had more extreme ramifications and explains that the entire North rose in revolt as a result of this egregious act.¹¹² However, in the medieval period it was not uncommon for nobles to have

¹⁰⁸ *The Chronicles of John of Worcester, ii: The Annals from 450-1066*. (1995). (R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, Ed.). Oxford. pp. 598-9.

¹⁰⁹ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 215.

¹¹⁰ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 578.

¹¹¹ ASC C, p. 1065.

¹¹² *The Chronicle of Florence of Worcester: with the two continuations; comprising annals of English History*, from

political rivals killed or exiled, and the aforementioned grievances against Earl Tostig fail to support this alleged act as the sole reason for the revolt. But there is enough evidence, however, to suggest that local thegns, such as Gospatric, Lord of Allerdale and son of Uhtred the Bold, would want to plot against the outsider earl with fervent antipathy.

In 1064, tensions between Earl Tostig and the northern nobles noticeably increased. One reason was the public assassination of the above named Gospatric at Edward's Christmas court.¹¹³ This was almost certainly ordered by a member of the Godwine family in connection with the murders in York the previous year, and William Kapelle argues that Tostig is responsible. This move shows the Earl undoubtedly felt threatened by the house of Bamburgh's influence in the North because the elder Gospatric was kin to Earl Uhtred the Bold and former ally of Earl Siward.¹¹⁴ He was also kin to the murdered Ulf Dolfinnson and Gamal Ormsson.¹¹⁵ Kapelle suggests that this also could have been part of Tostig's efforts to stifle northern separatism by cutting off the 'head of the Bamburgh snake'.¹¹⁶ Tom Licence further explains in his book *Edward the Confessor: Last of the Royal Blood* that these actions against the house of Bamburgh in 1064 illuminate Tostig's 'desperate attempts to manage a crisis of misrule'.¹¹⁷ On

the departure of the Romans to the reign of Edward I. (1968). (Forester, T.F., Ed. and Trans.) AMS Press.

¹¹³ Gospatric is also spelled Cospatric in some sources.

¹¹⁴ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 94. This is solidified through Kapelle's research, "The Cospatric killed at court was Earl Uhtred's youngest son and Earl Siward's collaborator in Cumberland."

¹¹⁵ Lancaster, A. 'Tostig Godwineson'. Lancaster writes, 'Gospatric the son of Uhtred, Lord of Allerdale, was the senior spokesman for the elder line of Waltheof's offspring. The other two were also linked to this Gospatric. Ulf Dolfinnson was likely to have been the grandson of Thorfinn MacThore to whom Gospatric had given lands in Allerdale in a writ during the time of Earl Siward. Gamal would have been the grandson and namesake who was also mentioned in the Allerdale writ, and son of Orm who had the Kirkdale sundial made.'

¹¹⁶ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 89.

¹¹⁷ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 215.

balance, Kapelle adds that this was a 'stupid' act on the Earl's part because northern separatism has its roots in Earl Uhtred's murder in 1016; therefore, this murder provided sufficient reason for the entire North to revolt.¹¹⁸ Kapelle answers two possible reasons why Tostig ordered Gospatric's assassination, but there are additional motives as well.

Following Gospatric's murder, speculation swirled that Queen Edith was directly responsible for the assassination.¹¹⁹ In support of Edith's participation, John of Worcester writes that she ordered Gospatric's death 'for love for her brother'.¹²⁰ Tom Licence argues that Tostig and Edith were both directly involved in the assassination, and posits that they became aware that Gospatric intended to expose Tostig's actions in York to the King's court.¹²¹ Another possible reason for Gospatric's attendance in court was his intention of challenging Tostig's appointment to the earldom. As a descendent of the ancient house of Bamburgh, Gospatric, for all intents and purposes, should have been ruling Northumbria as earl.¹²² As a consolation Gospatric became a member of the late Earl Siward's constituency and was given the opportunity to control the government of Cumbria.¹²³ Supporting this, extant evidence exists suggesting Gospatric wielded a great deal of power in the region, for he distributed writs

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 94-5.

¹¹⁹ Davis, H.W.C. (1905). Cumberland before the Norman Conquest, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. XX, Issue LXXVII, pp. 63-5.

¹²⁰ R.R. Darlington and P. McGurk, *The Chronicles of John of Worcester*, pp. 598-9; See also, Henry of Huntingdon. *Historia Anglorum: The History of the English People*. (1966). (Greenway, D. Ed. and Trans.) Oxford.

¹²¹ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 215.

¹²² His kinsman, Earl Uhtred the Bold, was killed by Cnut in 1012 and his family subsequently lost power to the Danes. For more information on the house of Bamburgh prior to 1066, see H.W.C. Davis' article 'Cumberland before the Norman Conquest'.

¹²³ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, pp. 92-4; this is also an example of Siward's aforementioned ability to remain in power by placing specific people in positions of power under his governorship.

throughout the region granting land and freedom to those living under his rule, including Thorfinn MacThore, possible grandfather of the murdered Ulf Dolfinnson.¹²⁴ Earl Tostig's recent loss of Cumbria, therefore, opened a deep wound for Gospatric, who may have intended to protest against the earl's appointment to King Edward. While it is unknown what truly motivated Gospatric, this is a highly plausible catalyst of his mistrust of Earl Tostig.¹²⁵ And, since it occurred the year following the murders of Gamel and Ulf, one can suspect these deaths are linked with Gospatric's presence in court.

However, without any direct evidence of Earl Tostig's hand in the murders of the thegns in York, the possibility remains that this story is based on a later invention designed to retroactively paint him as a tyrant following the Conquest.¹²⁶ This would have been an essential element in the process of garnering support for the Norman regime over the former Anglo-Saxon system. For instance, Tostig is not specifically named in the *Vita* as having colluded with Edith. It is likely that she recognized the long-standing antipathy between her brother and the house of Bamburgh, so Edith alone ordered the assassination in order to protect her brother from whatever Gospatric intended to expose at the Christmas court. Furthermore, there is a precedence for these ill feelings. Siward, former earl of Northumbria, had Earl Eadwulf of Bernicia killed in 1041 as part of his effort to gain control over the whole of Northumbria. Subsequently, the murder of Gospatric may have been the metaphorical straw that broke the southern-born earl's back.¹²⁷ The

¹²⁴ Davis, 'Cumberland before the Norman Conquest', pp. 63-5. A writ survives in which Gospatric greets his thegns and noblemen and describes them all as 'free'.

¹²⁵ In addition to the fact that Waltheof was overlooked and power was given to Tostig, the southerner.

¹²⁶ It is likely that Chronicle C and pro-Norman writers propagated such rumors.

¹²⁷ Tostig also showed preferences for Copsig, which may have added to Gospatric's dislike of the earl.

assassination of Gospatric is a critical event because it further divided northern and southern England. Due to the location of the murder and its proximity to the king, speculation regarding Edward's prior knowledge of the plot immediately began to circulate.¹²⁸ Tom Licence points out that if the murders in York took place as explained by John of Worcester, then Earl Tostig's actions were perhaps to prove to those who opposed him that he was willing and capable of defending his earldom at any and all costs.¹²⁹ In addition, the intimation of Gospatric's assassination in Edward's court suggests the king condoned the killing. Edward made no attempt to bring any of those responsible to justice.

The Northern Borders

Earl Tostig's methods of reform and justice in the North made him widely unpopular; and his church dealings, fiscal policies, and fervent pursuit of justice caused rumblings of discontent with the local nobility. In his comprehensive work *The Norman Conquest* Marc Morris explains that Tostig and his constituents' implementation of the two principal duties of raising revenue and supporting justice was an 'overzealous execution'.¹³⁰ Importantly, this 'overzealousness' may include the alleged murders of the nobles of York and Gospatric of Bamburgh. Morris adds that a third principal duty exists but was not directly mentioned in the sources;¹³¹ therefore, one must widen the search beyond the Northumbrian boundaries and look to Scotland and

¹²⁸ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 215.

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 214-16. Licence writes, 'By killing enemies in York, Tostig showed he was deadly'.

¹³⁰ Morris, *The Norman Conquest*, p. 124.

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 124.

Cumberland for additional evidence of Earl Tostig's shortcomings in order to determine additional reasons for the violent uprising in 1065.

Despite his reputation as a capable general and effective leader, Tostig had difficulty securing the northern borders, which became another point of criticism of his rule.¹³² During Earl Siward's tenure as earl of Northumbria, one of his principle goals was to secure the northern boundaries and restrict the Scots from advancing southward.¹³³ Although he was born in Scandinavia, Earl Siward enjoyed a long career in Northumbria. His success is owed to his talent for effective governance by means of placing his allies in powerful roles, as well as forcing his rivals to submit to his authority. Securing the northern border was an ongoing endeavor throughout his tenure, and he made advancements by reclaiming Cumberland from the Scots. However, Siward made no permanent changes to border policy as earl. During Earl Tostig's tenure, King MacBeth and his step-son Lulach were defeated and Malcolm III ('Canmore') took the throne of Scotland in 1058. Then, Malcolm began systematically raiding English lands once his throne was secure. As he slowly swallowed up territory in Cumberland, Siward's gains in the area were lost. Tostig did not apply similar tactics during his rule of Northumbria, and this decision exposed a chink in his armor ready for exploitation by his opponents.

Despite the losses in Cumbria, Tostig made no effort to retaliate against the Scots, which is quite curious based on his pugnacious countenance. The *Vita* distinguishes Tostig as a capable general and a worthy successor to Siward.¹³⁴ Symeon of Durham writes that Earl Tostig and

¹³² Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 209. Licence writes, 'Tostig's dealings with the Scots had been ineffective in the eight years he had occupied the northern earldom'.

¹³³ Ibid., p. 103. The Scottish kings had been inching further into England for nearly a century and had reached the River Tay. Today the River Tay is located in Scotland. It flows from the West and across the Highlands.

¹³⁴ *Vita*, p. 48.

Malcolm became blood brothers in 1060, which may have encouraged Malcolm's submission to King Edward without the need for violence.¹³⁵ However, the following year Malcolm again raided Earl Tostig's territory. Importantly, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* makes no mention of any retaliatory efforts by Tostig against the Scots, and the *Vita* also lacks documentation of any 'martial courage and military campaigns' into Scotland. William Kapelle theorizes that this is a reflection of Tostig's weak grip on power. He posits that the Earl could not afford losses in the field and concludes that he was failing as early as 1058-59.¹³⁶

The *Vita's* overall explanation of these events differs from that of the aforementioned opinions. It describes Tostig's efforts in Scotland as 'successful'.¹³⁷ The author touts that the earl not only struck a truce with Malcolm, but he also convinced him to make peace with Edward by 'scaring them [the Scots] off'.¹³⁸ If relying solely on the *Vita*, one can infer that Tostig's tactics, although unknown, were successful in bringing Malcolm to submit to Edward. And the 'tactics' employed may have been that of diplomacy rather than bloodshed. It is possible that Malcolm had previously agreed to the blood-bond and submission to Edward in exchange for Tostig's support of his claim to the throne of Scotland.¹³⁹ Therefore, Godwineson's support of Malcolm was simply a continuation of his predecessor's efforts against MacBeth. Malcolm III's

¹³⁵ Symeon of Durham. *Historia regum*. (Arnold, T. Ed.). p. 175.

¹³⁶ Morris, *The Norman Conquest*, p.126; Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*. pp. 93-5.

¹³⁷ This may be simply to balance its praise of Harold's efforts in Wales.

¹³⁸ Morris, *The Norman Conquest*, p. 124; The *Vita* uses the timing of Malcolm's raids on Lothian and Lindisfarne in 1061 to point out that Tostig was away from the earldom at the time.

¹³⁹ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 209. The author points out the Tostig was aided by the northern bishops during the negotiations with Malcolm.

reabsorption of Cumbria and Tostig's equanimity of the matter provided the northern nobles additional plausible evidence against Tostig's 'bad governance'.¹⁴⁰

Tostig Godwineson faced the difficult task of stabilizing and uniting a historically chaotic earldom. While he enjoyed the favor of King Edward and the southern people, those sentiments did not translate to the northern population. The new earl sought to reform the region using his piety, wealth, and influence. However, none of these attributes could overcome the simple fact that he was an outsider. For these reasons, despite his decade of effort, Tostig was most certainly doomed from the beginning; however, complaints did not turn into violence until 1065.

¹⁴⁰ *Vita*, p. 67. In addition, Tostig's personality traits also attributed to his unpopularity and hindered collective efforts with Northumbrian nobles. He was criticized for his unpleasant nature and inability to handle criticism from his constituents. In addition, he is said to have had a penchant for holding grudges. These characteristics made it difficult for those around him to build rapport and trust with the earl. (Van Kempen, 'The Mercian Connection', p, 16. The author describes Tostig as 'hot headed'.) One buffer against Tostig's discordant personality was Copsig (also Copsi) who served as his deputy. Copsig supported Tostig during his career as earl and went with him after his exile. He ended up being murdered by a member of the house of Bamburgh well into the reign of William the Conqueror. Copsig was a well-liked Northumbrian thegn who assisted in the running of the earldom. Copsig's service assisted with Tostig's transition to role as earl and helped to build ties with the other Northumbrian thegns. however, this did little to ingratiate Tostig with the thegns of York.

CHAPTER FOUR

Harold and Tostig: the feud that lead to a cataclysm

This chapter explores how Tostig and Harold Godwineson's relationship changed prior to Edward the Confessor's death in January 1066. This fissure is the most complicated and debated hindrance to Tostig's success in Northumbria. Using the few extant contemporary texts, this chapter will examine the possible flashpoints that caused their feud and then compare the findings to modern scholarship. The aim is to explain the correlation between the ramifications of this feud for the brothers and for the future of Anglo-Saxon England.¹⁴¹

Edward's reign at the start of 1065 is described in the sources as peaceful due to his trust in Harold and Tostig. On this, Richmard Mortimer explains in *Edward the Confessor: The Man and the Legend* that Edward was able to spend his time hunting and focusing on spiritual pursuits while the Godwineson brothers guarded the kingdom.¹⁴² Although, according to the *Vita*, the growing rift between Harold and Tostig threatened the very fabric of peace and stability within England. This rift between the brothers most likely began around the time of Gospatric's murder

¹⁴¹ Early in the *Vita* the author describes Harold and Tostig in a positive light but those lights begin to fade around the onset of the northern rebellion in late 1065. The author claims that tensions elevated between the brothers; however, it is unknown exactly when this occurred or what caused it. Evidence of the fissure can be found in the *Vita's* prose and poems. It must be noted that there is no evidence that the brothers were dead in the beginning of the *Vita* thus favoring the opinion that it was written contemporaneously with the events of the 1060's (Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, pp. 214-15). Tom Licence posits that if Harold's loyalty to Tostig had waned by 1065, 'Tostig's enemies had a fault-line by which to divide the royal court' (Ibid., p. 216). The author also notes that while looking to the *Vita* for evidence of this fissure, it is important to decipher what is fact and what has bled into the 'realm of opinion' within the text. As previously discussed, the text is biased in favor of the Godwine's due to its royal patron. Frank Barlow argues that the *Vita* was interrupted during its creation due to the catastrophic events in 1065 and 1066 (Licence, 'Date and Authorship,' p. 263). In the end, the actions that lead to the downfall of the kingdom forced the author to redirect his praise of the Godwines and focus on King Edward and Queen Edith's goodness and piety.

¹⁴² Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, p. 18. The author writes, 'From Edward's point of view the rest of his reign until shortly before its end was a period of peaceful tranquility, according to the *Vita*, in which after Godwine's death his sons Harold and Tostig spared the King the cares of the kingdom. The two Godwineson brothers became heroes of the piece...'

and subsequent upheaval in court, for Harold had been much too careful weaving threads of diplomacy throughout the kingdom to have his position jeopardized by his brother.¹⁴³ While the prose describes a growing division between the brothers, this divide is most evident in the poems. The poems allude to sibling rivalry as the cause of the rift, for the brothers grew up in a competitive environment. Tom Licence explains that, ‘He [Harold] and Tostig had both been trained in the business of bettering each other’.¹⁴⁴ On balance, the *Vita* describes the discord between the brothers and portrays their rivalry as ‘savage’, and the author pleads for the brothers to ‘water their own lands’ instead of partaking in pact breaking.¹⁴⁵ The text concludes with the reign of Edward the Confessor and provides hints of a ‘primordial chaos’ by darkly comparing Harold and Tostig’s feud to that of Caesar and Pompey. Tom Licence notes in his article ‘Date and Authorship of the *Vita Edwardi Regis*, ‘While the latter’s quarrel brought about the end of the Roman Republic, the supposition is that the brothers’ feud would do equal damage to England if the fracture is not repaired.’¹⁴⁶ The *Vita*’s author also warns that while unity breeds power, discourse tends to emblazon the trail for evil.¹⁴⁷ In *Edward the Confessor: Last of the Royal Blood*, Licence adds, ‘When they fought the Welsh and Scots, unity prevailed; but when

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 18.

¹⁴⁴ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 234.

¹⁴⁵ *Vita*, p. 115; Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 234. The author is certainly referencing Harold here in relation to the oaths made to William the Bastard while in his court in Normandy in 1064.

¹⁴⁶ Licence, ‘Date and Authorship’, p. 263. Folcard writes about an anticipated evil which would result from the inevitable civil war between the brothers if their feud was not ended. The author did not foresee the Conquest, nor did he anticipate the invasion of Hardrada.

¹⁴⁷ Tyler, E.M. (2017). *England in Europe: English Royal Women and Literacy Patronage, c. 1000- c. 1150*. Toronto, pp. 144-6, 175-180. Tyler adds that the author of the *Vita* also compares the brothers’ rivalry to the sons of Oedipus and the subsequent fall of the ruling house of Thebes.

they turned on each other, viciousness descended and opened the door to monsters'.¹⁴⁸ On balance, Snorri Sturluson's biography of Harald II Siggurdson *King Harald's Saga* explains that Harold was jealous of Tostig's status as Edward's favorite in court. While the saga is not necessarily historically accurate, the author captures the dark mood of England prior to the Conquest in his biography.¹⁴⁹ Interestingly, Sturluson's account mirrors that of the *Vita* and identifies the dangers of a dynastic rift between Tostig and Harold in regards to the longevity of England.

In addition to his familial relationships, the ongoing rivalry between the house of Godwine and the dynasty of Earl Leofric of Mercia also threatened Earl Tostig's position in Northumbria. The author of the *Vita* transparently writes of a long feud between the two families, and he describes it as an 'odia veteri' ['old hatreds'].¹⁵⁰ For instance, upon the death of King Cnut in 1035, a council was held by the earls and thegns to discuss the succession. The E

¹⁴⁸ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 233; Additional evidence of the growing tension between the brothers is found in the sentiments of the *Vita's* patron Queen Edith. While the author makes it clear that the queen maneuvered to aid in her brothers' political endeavors, her favoritism of Tostig seeps out of the writing. The author's diction also strongly alludes to the king's preference for him. For instance, the word *amor* is used to describe the king's sentiments toward Tostig. The choice of language strongly suggests that he and the king had a strong bond. (p. 234.) This could certainly have been the root of jealousy on Harold's part, which may have been a major factor in the rising tensions between the brothers. (Tyler, *England in Europe*, pp. 144-6, 175-180.) Tyler adds that the author of the *Vita* also compares the brothers' rivalry to the sons of Oedipus and the subsequent fall of the ruling house of Thebes.) The *Vita's* author's shift in tone is evident as he writes of great shame and the fratricide at Stamford Bridge in Poem VIII. (p. 233.) The author morosely explains why he does not continue singing the praises of the brothers throughout the work; this explains the undulous sentiments of Harold and Tostig in other texts.

¹⁴⁹ Snorri Sturluson, *Heimskringla*. (1966). (Magnusson, M. and Palsson, H. Trans.) Penguin Books. pp. 133-35. For example, he writes that Tostig was given the distinction as the head of the military; therefore, he wielded an extraordinary amount of power over the other earls in the kingdom. Harold, in comparison, controlled the royal exchequer. According to Snorri, this led to conflict when Harold was proclaimed king upon the death of Edward on 5 January 1066. While his account lacks corroboration, Snorri is able to astutely pinpoint the sense of discord between the brothers. No mention is made of a rebellion in Northumbria, and instead the author explains that the brothers exchanged heated letters during this time, in which Tostig's expressed his unhappiness about Harold's succession. It is at this point that Harold recognized his brother as a dangerous opponent and stripped him of all power, and this led to Tostig's abandonment of England following his exile in 1065.

¹⁵⁰ Baxter, 'The Politics', p. 1198. This rivalry waxed and waned between 1035 until 1066.

Chronicle describes Earl Godwine as the most powerful earl in attendance, but his power had the potential to be checked by the northern nobles, including Earl Leofric in the Midlands.¹⁵¹ When Edward the Confessor took power in 1043, Godwine enjoyed the benefits of the king's favor. This caused a dynastic struggle for power between Leofric and Godwine's kin that would last until the Battle of Hastings. This rivalry explains why the C Chronicle, written in the Midlands, heavily supports the earls of Mercia.

The rebellion of 1065 did not originate solely within the confines of Northumbria and York, nor was it solely sparked out of dissatisfaction with Earl Tostig's governance. Stephen Baxter explains that the northern thegns looked to Mercia, the home of Tostig's longtime opponent to assist with their cause. Stephen Baxter explains that the impetuous and ungovernable Ælfgar did not support Tostig's appointment to the earldom of Northumbria in 1055.¹⁵² And his fervent opposition of the Godwines lasted until his death in 1063.¹⁵³ However, the late Earl's familial relationship with the equally unwieldy King Gruffydd ap Llewelyn of northern Wales remained a point of contention because the Welsh King had consistently prevented Harold from securing the submission of the Welsh in the campaigns of 1055 and 1058. Without full access to the Midlands, Harold could not effectively bring the fight to the native Britons. As a result, Gruffydd continued to raid within the borders of Edward's kingdom. After Ælfgar's death in 1064, however, Wales became accessible, so Harold's long awaited invasion of Wales

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 1195.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 1197; *See also*, Frank Barlow's *The Godwins*, p. 74. Barlow writes, 'The 'C' Chronicle, followed John of Worcester, claims that he was innocent of any crime; 'D' alleges that he had committed hardly any crime; and 'E' states that he was charged with being a traitor to the king and all the people of the country'. Additionally, it was at this same council meeting that Tostig was given the earldom of Northumbria. It is highly plausible, therefore, that his thunderous denouncement of Tostig's appointment is the catalyst for his second exile, which occurred shortly thereafter.

¹⁵³ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*. pp. 209-10. Licence suggests Earl Ælfgar was either killed or exiled in 1063.

commenced.¹⁵⁴ In the end, the adversarial King Gruffydd was betrayed and beheaded by his own men while taking shelter in Ireland. In the wake of his death, Harold was finally able to secure control of the northern Welsh for Edward.¹⁵⁵ Through Harold and Tostig, Edward became the most powerful monarch on the island having gained the submission of both the Welch and Scots. In addition, the Godwine sons power further increased in England. E.A. Freeman remarks, 'They had won for themselves a position such no English family had won before or after.'¹⁵⁶

While Tostig's motivation for involvement in the Welsh campaign may have been to even the old feud with Leofric's dynasty, the goal of Harold's third campaign against the Welsh was not as myopic. Harold's actions suggest that he used the Welsh campaign to create the opportunity to ingratiate himself with Earl Ælfgar's sons, Eadwine and Morcar, in order to gain access to the rivers and roads of Mercia.¹⁵⁷ In a clandestine effort to ally the southern English and gain the subservience of the Welsh, Harold consolidated his power and influence without accounting for Tostig's position. In his article, 'The Mercian Connection', F.J. Van Kempen posits that Tostig's 'bad blood' with the house of Bamburgh and the Mercian nobles must have been acknowledged by Harold around 1063.¹⁵⁸ On this, the sources allude to a division. For example, the author of the *Vita* praises Harold for his defeat over the Welsh (leaving Tostig out),

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 209-10.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 212

¹⁵⁶ Barlow, F. (2002). *The Godwins: The Rise and Fall of a Noble Dynasty*. (1st edition). Oxford University Press. pp. 83-5.

¹⁵⁷ Van Kempen, F.J. (2009). The Mercian Connection, Harold Godwineson's Ambitions, Diplomacy and Channel-crossing, 1056-1066. *The Author Journal compilation*. Blackwell Publishing. p.15. *Hereafter*, 'The Mercian Connection'; *Also*, Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, pp. 209-10.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 17.

and similarly touts Tostig's submission of the Scots, in which Harold had no part.¹⁵⁹ It is in this subtle separation of the brothers' successes that a feud is detectable.¹⁶⁰ Additionally, the author describes the close relationship between Earl Harold and King Edward but notes that his relationship with Tostig was stronger.¹⁶¹ The *Vita* is careful to describe Edward's trust in Harold and Tostig by example of his delegation of military matters to the brothers. Tom Licence adds that Edward trusted the brothers to build their empires so that 'they'd take better care of his'.¹⁶² This is evidenced by the stone pillars Harold erected in Wales which read, 'Here was Harold the Conqueror'.¹⁶³ These entries offer a glimpse into Harold's intense desire for glory and accolades from Edward. Chronicler Folcard, breaking with the *Vita*'s opinion, generously praises Tostig for his strength in character and pious nature, and, in doing so, exposes Harold's faults by omission.¹⁶⁴ For these reasons, it would have been difficult for Tostig to ignore his brother's bid for the King's favoritism at this point.

Earl Harold's political maneuverings in 1063 and 1064 certainly show that he understood the need to build his empire. By subduing the Welsh, Harold had carved his place next to Edward in stone and solidified his position as the indispensable key to Edward's strength and influence. In addition, he built an alliance between Wessex and Mercia, which further increased the breadth and depth of his influence. A rumor exists which may explain how Harold brought

¹⁵⁹ *Vita*, pp. 65-7.

¹⁶⁰ Van Kempen, 'The Mercian Connection', pp. 209-10.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

¹⁶² Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, pp. 208-9.

¹⁶³ Barlow, *The Godwins*, p. 95.

¹⁶⁴ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 209; *Vita*, p. 48.

Wessex closer to the Mercians. Stephen Baxter explains that Harold married Eadwine and Morcar's sister Ealdgyth, King Gruffydd's widow, in order to bridge the gap between the earldoms.¹⁶⁵ Harold would have been well aware that securing the submission of the northern Welsh and his marriage to Ealdgyth would bind the Leofwineson and Godwineson dynasties together. For evidence of this restoration, Chronicle C changes its tone and begins to describe Harold more favorably as 1065 drew to a close. However, there is still debate whether the marriage occurred before or after Harold's coronation.¹⁶⁶ In support of this theory, historian Ann Williams writes, 'Harold aligned himself with both Mercians and Northumbrians, a political gain which overrode any familial feelings for a brother whose rule had led to disorder in the north'.¹⁶⁷

These alliances with the Mercian nobles threatened Tostig's security in the North. Chronicle D provides the most intriguing suggestion of sedition when it mentions a raid against one of Harold's Welsh properties in an effort to halt the building progress. This was a planned plot to sack Harold's hunting lodge in Portskewett before its completion in 1065.¹⁶⁸ D incriminates King Caradog ap Gruffydd, the late King Gruffydd's son and heir, in this conspiracy.¹⁶⁹ The author frustratingly fails to provide any specific details; however, this passage

¹⁶⁵ Baxter, 'The Politics', p. 1213.

¹⁶⁶ Howarth, *1066*, pp. 58-9.

¹⁶⁷ Williams, A. (1999). *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England – c. 500-1066*. Basingstoke: McMillan. p. 148; See also, Huscroft, R. *The Norman Conquest: A new introduction*. P. 107.

¹⁶⁸ Harold was building a hunting lodge on the Welsh side of the River Severn following the defeat of Gruffydd. But this was not a simple building project. Harold selected the location due to its importance in Welsh culture. It is called a maerdrefi. This was certainly a calculated political act on Harold's part.

¹⁶⁹ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, Worcester manuscript (D), 1065, *The Anglo Saxon Chronicle* (1961). (Whitelock, D.). p 137, 191; Whitelock translates: 'We do not know who first suggested this conspiracy'.

suggests the existence of a wider anti-Godwine conspiracy.¹⁷⁰ Therefore, it is believed that the raid in Portskewett is connected with the revolt in Northumbria, for ‘soon after this’ the thegns took up arms against Earl Tostig.¹⁷¹

In 1064, Harold returned from the court of William, duke of Normandy, for reasons that scholars still debate today. As a result of the events on the continent, the relationship between the Godwine brothers became strained. The *Vita* makes the point that Tostig and Queen Edith began to feel vulnerable following Harold’s return to Edward’s court. First, the possibility that Harold’s Mercian alliance with Morcar and Eadwine had been exposed by this point. According to the *Vita*, ‘ill will from long-standing rivalry [reigned] between these brothers of royal stock and Earl Tostig’.¹⁷² Second, Tostig and Edith had most likely heard the rumors surrounding the alleged oaths Harold made to William the Bastard, duke of Normandy, the previous year.¹⁷³ Even before his return to England, rumors that Harold had made treacherous oaths and promises to Duke William preceded him, already matriculating through Edward’s court. These ‘promises’ would cause future questions regarding Harold’s true allegiances both to the king and to Tostig. The accusation against Harold as an oath-breaker is damning because oaths were the glue that held

¹⁷⁰ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, pp. 233-4. This connection was made by Tyler, *England in Europe*, p. 181. Tyler used Henry of Huntingdon’s account of this feast. Additionally, Henry of Huntingdon writes of an event for which Tostig killed and pickled his servants in order to feed them to the king, his guest. According to Tom Licence, this tale could be ‘a reworking of the Portskewett affair’ and Tostig is fingered as the instigator

¹⁷¹ Van Kempen, ‘The Mercian Connection’, p. 18. There is widespread disagreement with this theory. Tom Licence, for instance, believes the assault on Portskewett was the result of King Caradog taking advantage of Harold’s detainment in Normandy and not part of a greater anti-Godwineson plot (Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 233).

¹⁷² *Vita*, p. 77.

¹⁷³ Van Kempen, ‘The Mercian Connection’, p. 17.

bonds together in Anglo-Saxon.¹⁷⁴ Despite these rumors, Harold returned from the continent and summarily reasserted himself as the king's close advisor just before the northern revolt. While this rumor had little effect on the rest of his life, it certainly haunted him in death.¹⁷⁵

Concurrently, Tostig's flame was close to extinction as tension in the North reached its apex as a maelstrom of grievances mounted against him.

¹⁷⁴ Oaths in the medieval period were made to swear fealty, patronage, innocence, etc. William most likely exploited this knowledge by making Harold his vassal while in Normandy.

¹⁷⁵ Due to Edward's death in January of 1066, there was little time for the king to bring this issue up with Harold. Additionally, Harold's time spent with William is a heavily debated topic. Due to the outcome of the Battle of Hastings, it became the protocol of Norman apologist writers to influence the readers' opinion of the Anglo-Saxons in favor of William. In order for this to be done, William's claim to the English throne needed to be solidified, and the Godwineson's needed to be discredited.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Rebellion of 1065

This chapter will construct a chronology of events of the rebellion of 1065 in order to provide context for the actions of both Harold and Tostig Godwineson. By doing this, Harold's motivations for maintaining a feud with Tostig will be made apparent. In addition, I will argue that by the time the revolt began, it was beyond Earl Tostig or the Crown's ability to control the sequence of events already in motion.

The northerners' resentment of Earl Tostig reached its boiling point in 1065. The D version of the Chronicle notes that on 3 October, three thegns of York, who had been overburdened by the Earl's tax policies, raised arms against the earl and marched south with 200 men and quickly occupied York.¹⁷⁶ Once inside the city walls, they stormed Tostig's house, although he was away at the time.¹⁷⁷ Lincoln and York became dual theatres of bloody revenge in which rebels hunted down Tostig's supporters and known associates and killed them on the spot.¹⁷⁸ After burning the Earl's property and killing hundreds of his men, tenants, and a few of his huscarls, the rebels declared Tostig an outlaw.¹⁷⁹ Chronicle C reflects, 'All his earldom

¹⁷⁶ ASC MS D, 1065; Alternatively, Mortimer believes that the rebellion began in November of the same year. Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, p. 19.

¹⁷⁷ Clarke, P.A. (1994). *The English Nobility under Edward the Confessor*. Oxford. p. 113. Clarke names Gamelbeorn, Dunstan son of Æthelnoth, and Glonieorn son of Heardwulf as these leaders; Rex, Peter. *Harold: The King Who Fell at Hastings*. Amberley Publishing Limited, 2017. Rex names Oswulf, Gospatric, son of Maldred, and Waltheof Siwardsson.

¹⁷⁸ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 235. The rebel army continued to amass fighting men from northern areas, to include: Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Lincolnshire. He writes of the violence, 'The rebels drew up lists of people they wanted to kill.' Citing the *Vita*, '...and many were slaughtered in the cities of York and Lincoln, in the streets, on water, in the woods and on the roads' (p. 77). See also, Baxter, S. (2008). *The Earls of Mercia: Lordship and Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England*. Oxford University Press. pp. 48-9.

¹⁷⁹ Housecarl or Old English: huscarl. A specialized war-band who provide loyal service to their lord; Alternatively,

unanimously deserted and outlawed him, and all those with him who promoted injustice, because he robbed God first'.¹⁸⁰ Following the siege of York, Earl Eadwine of Mercia rode south to meet with King Edward in support of the rebel cause.¹⁸¹ Concurrently, the rebels marched quickly to a bivouac location in Northampton. Meanwhile, Edward, in an effort to cease the spread of fighting southward, sent messengers to the rebel leaders.¹⁸² However, the contemporary sources vary in their description of events.

Chronicle C mentions the rebellion, although Earl Eadwine is exempt from much of the events and simply notes that Morcar replaced Tostig as earl. Additionally, Edward is not mentioned at all. The C explains, 'The earl of Mercia and his brother are thus absolved of their involvement in, or their failure to prevent, the harrying of the Midlands.'¹⁸³ In his article 'The MS C of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle and the politics of Mid-Eleventh-Century England', Stephen Baxter explains that this is unsurprising since the C favors the Mercian perspective to a considerable degree.¹⁸⁴ One reason for this omission is that any collusion with the rebels, specifically Harold Godwineson, would have appeared as traitorous to the Norman reader at the time of the C's writing. For this reason, the chroniclers would have wanted to distance the Mercian brothers

Peter Rex cites the following passage from the *Vita*, pp. 80-1: 'a party of nobles who he had repressed with the heavy yoke of rule because of their misdeeds, conspired among themselves against him.' The *Vita* is very careful to place the blame on the northern thegns by explaining that Tostig had to be heavy-handed with them due to their part in breaking the law; It is probable that this swift attack destroyed the organization of Tostig's soldiers and prevented the establishment of any defenses.

¹⁸⁰ *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, MS C*. (2000). (O'Brien, K. and O'Keefe, K., Ed.) Boydell & Brewer. p 118. The C version makes it very clear that the north rose against Tostig due to the earl's treatment of the Church.

¹⁸¹ He met with Harold, sent as negotiator, on his way to Westminster.

¹⁸² Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 235.

¹⁸³ Baxter, 'The Politics', p. 1212.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1212.

from any wrongdoing.¹⁸⁵ The second reason relates to the vast destruction of Mercian lands which occurred during the uprising.¹⁸⁶ John of Worcester explains that despite Harold's best efforts to reach an accord, the rebels returned north after assembling at Northampton and harangued the citizens in the surrounding area. Food stores were burned and thousands of heads of cattle were stolen in addition to the destruction of homes and burning of grassland.¹⁸⁷ In addition, hundreds of people were enslaved by the rebels, demonstrating their understanding of the need and importance of 'wealth and power'.¹⁸⁸

Moreover, following the success in York, the connection between the northern nobles and the Mercians becomes clear because the rebels unanimously agreed to invite Morcar to take control of the territory.¹⁸⁹ The Mercian involvement in the revolt provides evidence of their collusion with the rebels long before the fighting began. Furthermore, this event exposes the connection between the revolt and Harold. The D and E versions of the Chronicle both state that the rebels demanded that King Edward immediately replace Tostig in favor of Morcar, and insist that Harold was the messenger between Eadwine and Edward;¹⁹⁰ while Chronicle C leaves

¹⁸⁵ Earls Eadwine and Morcar survived the Conquest, and any collusion with the Godwinesons may have cast them in an unfavorable and dangerous light.

¹⁸⁶ The rebels' vast destruction of Mercian lands during the rebellion would reflect poorly on the Mercian nobles if exposed in the Chronicle. *For more information, see William Kapelle's The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 99.

¹⁸⁷ John of Worcester, ii, p. 599. The author is careful to separate Harold from the rebels.

¹⁸⁸ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 99.

¹⁸⁹ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 235.

¹⁹⁰ Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, p. 13.

Edward out of the rebellion completely.¹⁹¹ This omission suggests that the chroniclers had already recognized Harold as the lead authority in England at the time.

Alternatively, the *Vita*'s record of events expresses an anti-northern viewpoint. The author explains that despite the Mercian's urgency, negotiations moved slowly. One reason for the delay was due to Edward taking Earl Tostig's side in the conflict; this is evidenced in the *Vita* when the King called for additional soldiers. The author writes, he [Edward] 'stirred up the whole population of the rest of England by a royal edict'.¹⁹² Despite his fervent request for arms, the result of King Edward's call was lackluster as local fyrds barely mustered, even after two months. The *Vita* capitulates:

Some strove to calm the raging spirit of the king and urged that the attack should not be mounted. After they had struggled for a long time, they did not so much divert the king from his desire to march as wrongfully and against his will desert him. Sorrowing at this, he fell ill, and from that day until the day of his death he bore a sickness of the mind. He protested to God with deep sorrow and complained to Him, that he was deprived of the due obedience of his men in repressing the presumption of the unrighteous; and he called down God's vengeance upon them ...¹⁹³

Noticeably, concurrent military intervention from Harold was nonexistent, and this sparked later speculation that the earl of Wessex had stake in both sides of the rebellion. Chronicler Folcard

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p 13.

¹⁹² *Vita*, pp. 80-1.

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp. 80-1.

insists that despite the diminutive size of the king's available forces, Harold continued to mediate between the rebels and the Crown.¹⁹⁴ He also adds that Harold met with the northerners at least three times in order to seek pacification with the carrot of Edward's promises. Tom Licence notes in his book *Edward the Confessor: Last of the Royal Blood* that it is possible that Folcard may have embellished in an effort to express the rebels' 'intransigence'.¹⁹⁵ Noticeably, both Chronicle C and John of Worcester stress Harold's effort in seeking peace between Tostig and the rebels.¹⁹⁶ The author stresses that Harold's hand was forced, and compliance with the northern nobles' demands seemed the only option to avoid full-scale war.¹⁹⁷ Based on the systematic destruction of Tostig's and Siward's former lands, the rebels displayed their clear advantage over the king. At this point it was clear that King Edward's power was noticeably diminished. So, just before Christmas of 1065, Edward and Tostig had lost the war before even meeting the rebels on the battlefield.

¹⁹⁴ The rebels were highly motivated and well-armed, while the king behind a thin shield wall of promises.

¹⁹⁵ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, pp. 235-38; *See also*, John of Worcester, ii, p. 599.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

CHAPTER SIX

Tostig: Tyrant or Victim of Betrayal?

Eventually
 All things decline
 Everything falters, dies and ends
 Towers cave in, walls collapse
 Roses wither, horses stumble
 Cloth grows old, men expire
 Iron rusts and timbers rot away
 Nothing made by hand will last
 I understand the truth
 That all must die, both clerk and lay
 And fame of men now dead
 Will quickly be forgotten
 Unless the clerk takes up his pen
 And brings their deeds to life again.¹⁹⁸

The aim of this chapter is to argue how Earl Harold Godwineson gained supremacy in England. This will be done by examining the northern thegns' machinations to oust their earl from power, as this resulted in an insurmountable hurdle for Earl Tostig. Due to the efforts of those against him, Tostig's future was set in motion before blood was ever drawn in York.

¹⁹⁸ Wace, *Roman de Rou*, III, ll. 131-142 (c. 1170).

Additionally, the ramifications of this impediment would have been unknown to him at the time. Moreover, the Earl may have been unaware of the difficulties required for the successful maintenance of Northumbria upon his appointment in 1055. I will argue that none of Tostig's actions were done with the intention of destroying or damaging the earldom, and, based on the evidence, it is evident that Tostig was the victim of betrayal and was not a tyrant as implied by contemporary and modern scholarship.

While it is difficult to find much direct evidence of Earl Tostig's specific taxation policies in the extant texts, it is evident that the earl over-burdened the northerners with the levies. William Kapelle calls this act, 'A serious transgression of their [northerners'] privileges'.¹⁹⁹ Tostig must have been aware of the potential opposition of a tax increase; however, (as accused by the nobles in 1065) 'this departure from tradition was not based in greed, but a necessary action needed to bolster his private army and recoup funds spent on the campaign in Wales'.²⁰⁰ Following the Norman Conquest, the Domesday description of the northern tax assessment indicates a much lower rate than the rest of England.²⁰¹ This is evidence that the rebellion of 1065 was successful enough to maintain an independent fiscal system into the Norman period. William Kapelle concludes that the revolt of 1065 was due to Tostig's inability to rule in the manner to which the Northumbrians had become accustomed, thus the overarching reason for the revolt lies simply in the fact that the tax hike impacted enough

¹⁹⁹ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 96.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 96.

²⁰¹ The Domesday Book or Doomsday Book was a compilation of all the lands and wealth within England at the time of William the Conqueror's reign.

northerners, peasants and nobles alike to 'churn the waters of peace with the south and cause a popular uprising'.²⁰²

Alternatively, leaning heavily in favor of Tostig, the *Vita* delicately provides an alternative cause for the revolt. The author summarizes that the northerners revolted simply because, 'The wild and lawless Northumbrians would not abide Tostig's firm rule'.²⁰³ The author then shifts focus to the royal couple's emotional reactions to the rebellion and Tostig's subsequent exile, and he explains that the King suffered more heavily as a result of the loss of Tostig than over the rebellion and near civil war. In the immediate aftermath, Edward sunk into a depression that hung over him until his death. Edith similarly grieved the absence of her brother. Notably, Harold is sparsely mentioned in the *Vita* in the period following the rebellion except when describing his presence in court following the revolt where Tostig's made accusations of treachery against him. It is in this section of verse in the *Vita* in which the author laments over the division between Harold and Tostig.²⁰⁴ But there are other factors which must be considered, and the rebellion's connection with Mercia is one such element.

William Kapelle suggests that Earl Tostig inadvertently united the North, but the thegns knew their limitations despite the 'momentary coherence.' He argues, 'This attack on the fiscal privileges of the North united the Yorkshiremen with the Northumbrians and produced the popular support for the revolt of 1065'.²⁰⁵ Because the revolt consisted of both Northumbrians

²⁰² Ibid., p. 96.

²⁰³ Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, p. 19.

²⁰⁴ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 234-6.

²⁰⁵ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 96-98.

and men of York, they would be unable to stay unified if they could not agree on a leader. Therefore, the Mercian relationship resulted solely from the need of an impartial ruler from outside the North. The northerners were farsighted enough to know that unification was key if they wanted to 'intimidate' Edward the Confessor.²⁰⁶ This assertion contrasts other theories that the Mercian connection grew out of the need to appease Edward by seeking his approval of any candidates for earl.²⁰⁷ But northern politics and the veracity of the 1065 rebellion refute this theory. In fact, the events of 1065 actually further support the motive of rebellion as a push for northern separatism.

The most intriguing evidence of betrayal is not found within Tostig's household or constituency but with his older brother, Harold. Despite the earl of Wessex's reputation as a charismatic and successful earl, it is possible to draw a connection between the future king of England and his brother Tostig's downfall. Following the rebellion, whispers carried rumors suggesting Harold was somehow involved with the uprising, although no specific accusation is recorded. John of Worcester explains that Tostig requested that Harold serve as the messenger between the rebels and the king during the revolt. Tom Licence theorizes that, if this account is accurate, either Tostig still trusted his brother at this point; or, more calculatingly, Tostig anticipated that Harold would 'show his hand in his treachery'.²⁰⁸ In support of the latter sentiment, Henry of Huntingdon suggests that, 'After his return to England, he [Harold] was

²⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 100-1.

²⁰⁷ Wilkinson. (1939). Northumbrian Separatism in 1065-66. *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*. (Vol. 23). pp. 509-15.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 236. Licence writes, '...he either trusted Harold or expected him to show his hand and incriminate himself'.

guilty of perjury'.²⁰⁹ Frustratingly, the author does not expound upon this incendiary claim against Harold's reputation. According to the *Vita*, at the post-revolt assembly with Edward and the witan, Tostig directly accused his brother of treachery by formulating the uprising.²¹⁰ Harold managed to absolve himself by swearing oaths of innocence before the court. Henry of Huntingdon suggests that Harold's oaths of innocence made in front of the witan were fictitious.²¹¹

The *Vita* provides a defense of Harold's personal qualities and integrity. The author praises both brothers in their separate deeds and commends their pursuit of justice. Harold was said to be 'patient, and kind to men of good will, but disturbers of the peace, thieves and robbers, this champion of the law threatened with the terrible face of the lion'.²¹² Conversely, Tostig is accused of being 'overzealous' and tyrannical in similar pursuits. The *Vita* describes Harold as a 'lion' to those who threatened the King's peace, which is not dissimilar to the description of Tostig's pursuit of justice, for they 'both preserved with what they had begun'. Tostig sought justice vigorously and Harold prudently, 'in action the one aimed at success, the other also at happiness'.²¹³ The diction employed by the author provides evidence of their respective

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 238.

²¹⁰ *Vita*, pp. 79-81.

²¹¹ Licence, 'Date and Authorship', p. 264. Licence cites the *Vita* when exploring this event, 'According to the author, Tostig publically accused Harold of conspiring against him, and Harold cleared himself by swearing oaths'. However, it was likely known that Harold had escaped William's court by swearing oaths of fealty to him, therefore, he was already known as an oath breaker. In addition, the rumors about Harold's oaths to Duke William of Normandy would have reached Edward's court by this time

²¹² Howarth, D. (1977). *1066: The Year of the Conquest*. New York: Penguin Books, p. 53.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 53.

reputations post-1066. This sentiment helped to drive the public opinion of the brothers after their deaths, and the consequences of the revolt is reflected in the written record.

Despite Harold's absence from England while at the court of William of Normandy, his years of strategic alliance building and jockeying for Edward's favoritism put Tostig into an unwinnable situation. To add to this, the failure of the Crown to put down the rebellion and the inter-dynastic rift between the brothers ultimately left the younger Godwine completely disinherited and stripped of all power and authority; while the elder, having gained Mercian support and a tentative understanding with the northern nobles, enjoyed a new level of wealth and authority.²¹⁴ As a result of this dynastic shift, Earls Harold, Morcar, and Eadwine were left in control of the most territory in the country and were therefore the most powerful nobles in England (See figure 2). For these reasons, regardless of the question of Harold's integrity, the weight of the rebellion was more dangerous at that time than the oaths Harold had allegedly made to a foreigner. So, in the end, the King's hand was forced and Tostig left England following the rebellion.

Harold had positioned himself well within King Edward's court, but the King's affinity for Tostig remained following his banishment. The *Vita* explains that Tostig's absence from court contributed to Edward's waning health. The author stresses that Edward's acceptance of Tostig's forced exile weighed heavily upon him. This burden contributed to the King's chronic illness, and, perhaps, induced a stroke.²¹⁵ The author writes, 'From that day until the day of his

²¹⁴ Harold most likely supported Waltheof's appointment to a position of power in the Midlands. Despite Tostig's over-taking of Waltheof's claim to the earldom of Northumbria, Harold and Waltheof were most likely on good terms due to Harold's support. *For a more detailed account of this feud, see, Bates, William the Conqueror*, p. 209.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

death he bore a sickness of the mind', hinting at Edward's lack of sensibility.²¹⁶ Harold's position in court allowed him to rule in Edward's place as he became increasingly ill. Tom Licence draws upon John of Worcester for evidence that King Edward allowed Harold to reign as regent beginning in 1065 due to his chronic infirmity. He explains that while Harold's star shined, 'he [Edward] was fading into darkness'.²¹⁷ Furthermore, the loss of Tostig from his elevated position in the kingdom also weakened Queen Edith's voice of authority within the halls of power.²¹⁸ Whether due to sickness, grief, or a combination of the two, King Edward succumbed to his illness and died on 4 January 1066, and Harold succeeded him and was crowned in Westminster Abbey on 6 January just one day after Edward's funeral.²¹⁹

One cannot deny that the rebellion of 1065 cemented Harold's fate as the future king, but his involvement in the Northumbrian revolt continues to be the subject of scholarly debate. Because there is no definitive proof that he directly conspired against Tostig, it is suggested that Harold's aim was simply to unify the country in the face of threats from Normandy and Scandinavia. William the Bastard had openly declared his interest in the English throne, and King Harald III 'Hardrada' of Norway's nephew King Magnus ('the Good') had previously made his intentions for invasion clear.²²⁰ It is plausible, therefore, that Harold supported Tostig's exile in order to ensure peace and loyalty from the northerners. In support of Harold, Folcard

²¹⁶ Ibid., p. 81.

²¹⁷ Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 238.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 238.

²¹⁹ He became Harold II of England upon his rise to the throne. Interestingly, when Harold became king in 1066, most people would not have been unaware that Edward was dead.

²²⁰ Barlow, *Edward*, p. 239; In addition, Frank Barlow gives Harold the benefit of the doubt and says he is calculating but not treacherous; King Magnus threatened invasion but made a deal with Harthacnut of England to be each other's heirs upon their deaths.

adamantly argues that the Earl did not collude with the rebels against his brother.²²¹ However, there are additional reasons to believe that Harold indeed acted with mal intent toward his brother.

Evidence suggests that Harold was, in fact, the great orchestrator of the bloody coup of 1065. First, Harold needed to remove his brother from the equation so that he could take advantage of the King's ill health and place himself at the top of the list of successors; and, most importantly, above the claim of Edgar ('the Ætheling').²²² It is likely that Tostig and Edith's suspicions were in fact true, and the younger Godwine suffered as a result. The *Vita* notes that the more Tostig's power was compromised prior to the rebellion, the more fervently Edith stood beside him. Importantly, this statement can also be connected to the raid on Harold's property in Wales in 1065²²³; Edith may in fact have been involved in Portskewett as a way to retaliate on Tostig's behalf.²²⁴ Further evidence of Tostig and Edith's pushback against Harold's calculated maneuvering is found in the *Vita*. The author points out that prior to Harold's consecration in 1066, Edith unsuccessfully plead with Harold to pardon Tostig. Van Kempen uses this evidence to suggest that Harold had surreptitiously undermined Tostig by forming an alliance with the Mercian nobles in order to remove him as a threat. Additionally, the reinstatement of Tostig would weaken any bonds forged with the Mercians and Northumbrians, therefore he opted

²²¹ *Vita*, pp. 77-91.

²²² 'Ætheling' - meaning direct descendent of Cerdic, first Saxon king of Wessex.

²²³ Van Kempen, 'The Mercian Connection', p. 238.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 238. This act is similar to the accusation that Edith ordered the assassination of Gospatric for her brother's protection.

against it.²²⁵ In addition to the evidence against Harold before and after the revolt, his actions following his coronation in 1066 further support this theory.

Despite Harold's strategic formation of alliances and elevation to king, he viewed Tostig as a threat to his power both politically and militarily. First, Tostig was still well liked in southern England, and his reputation as a superb strategist and capable soldier remained strong. For these reasons, if Tostig were to return to England, his presence would undermine Harold's authority. Based on these factors, it appears that Harold never intended for his brother to return from exile. In addition to the political hazard Tostig's absence created, the ex-earl also posed a potential military threat to Harold.²²⁶ Tostig's marriage to Judith, the daughter of Count Baldwin of Flanders, allowed him the ability to acquire the funds necessary to raise an army in order to return to England.²²⁷ Due to his family's past exile due to Sweyn Godwineson in 1051, Tostig knew he could raise a mercenary army in order to reclaim his earldom, titles, and lands, by sword point if necessary.²²⁸ At the same time, however, Stephen Baxter explains, that period of political

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 238.

²²⁶ This knowledge may explain Tostig's ambitious attempt to gain support from Count Baldwin of Flanders, his father-in-law, in order to return to England. He first sought sanctuary in Flanders in November of 1065.

²²⁷ Baldwin did provide his son-in-law with money and ships and allowed him and his entourage to stay briefly following the exile.

²²⁸ Sweyn Godwineson, the eldest of Earl Godwine's sons, gathered a force and returned to England to reclaim his earldom following his exile in 1049. Sweyn had committed treason by kidnapping and raping a cloistered woman. The unpopular ex-earl enjoyed support from his father and brothers and forced the kingdom to the brink of civil war. And while the Godwinesons were banished by Edward following this conflict, they returned with a fleet and reclaimed their positions in 1052. The reinstatement of their previous lands and titles to the members of the house of Godwine is an example of the Earl of Wessex's immense influence over the King. *For more information, see Frank Barlow's The Godwines: The Rise and Fall of a Noble Dynasty.*

turmoil likely taught those in power, namely Harold, not to pardon nobles who acted in opposition to the Crown.²²⁹

Further motive for King Harold's refusal to reinstate his brother is evident in the mere existence of Edgar the Ætheling. Edward the Confessor died with no children and only one heir, Edgar, grandson of Edward's older half-brother, Edmund ('Ironside').²³⁰ Tostig's close connection with Edgar had the potential to undermine Harold's pursuit of the crown. The *Vita* confirms Edward and Edith's love for the king's young nephew, and their bond, as well as their admiration for Tostig, stood in opposition to Harold's rise to the throne. L. Roach explains in his book *Æthelred the Unready* that Harold must have equated Edgar with a direct threat to his longevity of rule; additionally, this knowledge may very well have fueled Tostig's allegations against Harold as these clues of betrayal began to surface in 1065.²³¹ It is for these reasons that King Harold denied his sister's request to bring Tostig home after taking the throne in 1066. Therefore, it is likely that Tostig and Edith's suspicions about Harold were in fact true and brother and sister suffered as a result.

While the C and D versions of the Chronicle explain that King Edward had knowingly entrusted Harold with the realm before his death in January 1066, the *Vita* describes Edward reeling against those he trusted while on his deathbed.²³² Richard Mortimer suggests in *Edward*

²²⁹ Baxter, 'Politics,' p. 1205. The author suggests that Robert of Jumièges was the one actually responsible for the crisis of 1051. Baxter posits that Jumièges sought to damage Edward's relationship with Tostig. The plan worked until Godwine and his progeny were able to return to England with the support of the southern people, as well as hired mercenaries.

²³⁰ It is this author's opinion that the fact that the Crown and the witan actively sought to find an heir, it dispels rumors that Edward wanted William of Normandy or Harold as his successors.

²³¹ Roach, L. (2016). *Æthelred the Unready*. Yale University Press. pp. 110-11; Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 239.

²³² Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, p. 14.

the Confessor: the Man and the Legend that Edward railed against the evil in the kingdom, while at the same time entrusting it 'to those same evildoers';²³³ and Edward's mind, clouded by sickness and regret, reminded him of his pain often and ardently.²³⁴ The King also prophesized the onset of chaos, death, and destruction in the kingdom. Edward's deathbed proclamations are indicative of a man who had come to the realization that his kingdom was on the verge of collapse due to civil unrest and the presence of evil counselors.²³⁵ One can make the inference, therefore, that Edward unwillingly left the realm to Harold. In addition, Tom Licence argues that Harold colluded with the witan in order to ensure his ascension once Edward died.²³⁶ In support of this, many of the extant writs and charters from this time were post-Conquest forgeries, and these undoubtedly influenced later opinions of these events.²³⁷ Whether honorably or surreptitiously, Harold was able to properly place himself in the best possible position for this outcome even though it required the abandonment of his brother.

²³³ Ibid., p. 14. One such counselor is most likely Harold Godwineson.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 14.

²³⁵ It is possible to relate Harold to one of these evil counselors.

²³⁶ The witan was a council of great men in Anglo-Saxon court; Harold had no blood claim to the throne of England, for his only familial connection was through his sister. Therefore, Harold's strongest claim is that it was willed by Edward before he died. In support of this, Tom Licence argues that Harold manipulated the witan in order to assume the throne following the Confessor's death. Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 240.) Interestingly, during the Northumbrian revolt, just over two months prior to the coronation, it was not obvious that Edward was in a weakened state. The C Chronicle notes that on the surface his death appeared 'sudden'. (*ASC C*, pp. 1065-6.) Therefore, it is possible that Harold had been taking advantage of the king's fragile state and was therefore able to stage a coup immediately upon his death. To accomplish this, Harold used his proximity to the witan during the waning days of Edward's life. Licence explains that, 'No doubt in the past week Harold had approached or leaned on enough of the witan to be sure of a favorable reaction'. (Licence, *Edward the Confessor*, p. 240.) However, these accusations are most likely based in the post-Conquest opinion of Norman writers in order to delegitimize Harold's claim in order to solidify William's right to the throne. (Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, pp. 20-21.) The author explains that the Northumbrian revolt was documented in the *Vita* after Edward's death. This was done in order to reshape the perception of the late king in the Anglo-Norman mind. He concludes that the *Vita's* purpose was to, 1.; recast Edward in a saintly light, and 2.; to promote Edith's voice in order to clear her family's name.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 240.

John of Worcester writes that King Harold's first major act was to repeal 'unjust laws and legislate just ones'.²³⁸ This was done to further ingratiate himself with the northern earls, to whom he 'had sacrificed his brother'.²³⁹ Because of the relationship Harold fostered between the North and Midlands and his purposeful maneuvering to ensure that the thegns were in debt to him, the new king was able to focus on the defense structure of the South in anticipation for the invasion of William of Normandy as well as threats from Norway. The sacrificing of Tostig in order to secure the loyalty from the earls of England is highly likely based on Harold's experience William's court the year prior. Having made oaths to the Duke regarding his support of his claim to the throne following Edward's death, Harold must have been well aware of his precarious position he placed himself in by becoming king of the English. In order to protect the Crown, he had to solidify his earls' allegiance to him so that Harold could focus on building an army in order to defend against the clearest threat, Normandy.

²³⁸ Shama, *The History of Britain*, pp. 88-90.

²³⁹ Ibid., pp. 88-90.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

On 25 September 1066, Tostig was killed fighting for the reinstatement of his titles alongside King Harald Hardrada of Norway, King Harold's enemy, at the Battle of Stamford Bridge.²⁴⁰ In the end, despite Harold's vigilant and ruthless methods to secure his path to the throne and racing nearly 200 miles south to Hastings, he was unable to defeat the formidable William the Bastard.²⁴¹ It is impossible to know if Tostig crossed King Harold's mind as the sun rose on 14 October and his men began to ready themselves for the battle ahead. Regardless, Harold's sacrifice of Tostig was all for naught as the hard-fought and bloody battle drew to a close. At the end of the day, King Harold, along with his brothers Gyrth and Leofwine lay dead and William took control of England by rite of conquest. 1066 altered the course of history and changed the culture and political framework of England.²⁴² After six hundred years the age of the Anglo-Saxon kings of England came to an end. The *Vita* expresses the tragedy of Godwine family's fall in a poem:

These two great brothers of a cloud-born land,
The kingdom's sacred oaks, two Hercules,

²⁴⁰ Tostig was alone in his pursuit as his other brothers, Gyrth and Leofwine, remained loyal to Harold.

²⁴¹ King Harold had to return south from the battle of Stamford Bridge to meet William in the south. His army was tired from the previous battle and the long 185-mile march was arduous. For these reasons, Harold arrived at Hasting's with a diminished army, having not waited for reinforcements.

²⁴² Queen Edith lost all but one brother in the fall of 1066, but her continued allegiance to her family remains evident in the *Vita*.

Excel all Englishmen when joined in peace;
 And as of yore sky's divided weight
 Was held by Atlas here, Heracles there,
 Lest heaven fall and earth sink all around,
 So these angelic Angles with joined strength
 And like agreement guard English bounds.²⁴³

Based on the evidence, it is my conclusion that Tostig was intentionally maligned by the northern thegns, and this led to the revolt of 1065. The first reason is due to the fact that Tostig was viewed as an outsider by the northerners. This was enough to convince some of the nobles to plot against him in order to place someone in whom they trust in the position of earl. The xenophobic rationale behind this decision by the northern nobles is based on the inherent English tradition to be cautious and fearful of outsiders. The second reason can be found in the double standards by which Tostig was held. In light of the methods of rule of the day, as well as standards of practice used by both contemporaneous and past Anglo-Saxon leaders, the coup of 1055 was a result of the northern thegns' strategic use of their dissatisfaction with Tostig's governance in order to formulate a slanderous grass-roots campaign against him. William Kapelle attributes this to Tostig's inability to rule the Northumbrians in the way they expected to be governed.²⁴⁴ However, this statement lacks empathy and understanding for the Earl's integrity and bravery.

²⁴³ *Vita*, pp. 58-9. In the period between 1062 and 1065, Harold and Tostig enjoyed great power and most threats to the English crown had waned.

²⁴⁴ Kapelle, *The Norman Conquest of the North*, p. 96.

The unrest also allowed for Eadwine and Morcar, the Mercian nobles, to collude with the northern thegns and form an alliance. In addition to bettering Morcar's political standing, their participation in the revolt was motivated by the desire to avenge their father Ælfgar following his longtime feud with Tostig. This was mutually beneficial for the northerners because a Mercian earl would work objectively with both Northumbria and York. Additionally, having formed an alliance with the Mercians, Harold took advantage of the opportunity to use the rebels' cause to better his position in Edward's court. Due to Harold's diplomatic efforts he became the most powerful earl in the kingdom; and as Harold's influence waxed, Edward's power waned. Also, once the rebellion began, King Edward was too militarily weak to violently break the rebellion and was forced to cede to the northerners' demands by standing down and exiling Tostig. While Harold would have been well aware that sacrificing Tostig would have long running ramifications regarding his relationship with King Edward and Queen Edith, removing his younger brother from the equation allowed Harold to gain support from the Northumbrians and men of York. In his book *The Norman Conquest: A New Introduction* Richard Huscroft point out that by abandoning Tostig, Harold 'created problems which eventually lead to his downfall'.²⁴⁵ However, Edward's death so soon after the end of the rebellion appeared a stroke of luck for Harold who was able to use his carefully curated network of power and fidelity to his advantage and earn the witan's vote for king despite having no royal blood.

The revolt of 1065 destroyed the English political system and destabilized the relationship between the North and South.²⁴⁶ The rebellion proves that, whether intentionally or

²⁴⁵ Huscroft, R. (2013). *The Norman Conquest: A New Introduction*. Oxfordshire: Routledge. p. 107.

²⁴⁶ Bates, D. (2016). *William the Conqueror*. New Haven: Yale University Press. pp. 209-10.

not, Tostig failed to recognize the importance of northern traditions, to include the system of laws and fiscal policies; and his huscarls were unable to protect him from the powerful cultural nuances of the region and the nobles who were firmly entrenched in their traditions.

Furthermore, Tostig's installation of southern laws in the rigid northern system also created resentment between north and south, and his strict deliverance of punishments and land seizures of those penalized caused further resentment. Lastly, Earl Tostig failed to hold the northern borders despite the temporary advancements made by his predecessor.

Tostig's modern reputation should reflect an intelligent and energetic leader who sought to reform the Northumbrian territory through efforts to eradicate outlaw violence and reconfigure its financial state in the face of staunch opposition from the resident thegns. Tostig had the daunting task of restructuring a region with many weaknesses, several of which were so interwoven they were nearly impossible to unravel due to the region's long history and the inhabitants' proud culture and identity that long predated the Earl. Frank Barlow provides the explanation that, '... [Tostig] had the most difficult task. The Northumbrian aristocracy, in which Scandinavian blood and culture predominated, cannot have relished the rule of a West-Saxon earl'.²⁴⁷ Moreover, his predecessor, Earl Siward, was only able to temporarily stabilize the region and made no permanent improvements. As a result, Tostig was able to formulate his own plan for diplomacy with the Scots. And, importantly, Tostig's soured relationship with his brother Harold solidified his fate.

D. Howarth reflects in his book *1066: The Year of the Conquest* that like many defeated rulers in history, Harold and Tostig Godwineson have 'the misfortune in history to be

²⁴⁷ Barlow, *The Godwins*, p. 89.

remembered for what his foreign enemies said of him'.²⁴⁸ After the Conquest, Anglo-Saxon voices were muted while those of the Normans were boldly proclaimed. As the defeated king, the Normans set about discrediting King Harold following his defeat, and Tostig, having been criticized over his leadership style, was easily resigned to history as a tyrant and treacherous enemy of the Crown. Richard Mortimer sums up the family's dramatic end, writing that the Godwines 'rose and fell together'.²⁴⁹ Similarly, the *Vita* laments Stamford Bridge and Hastings with the felicitous words, 'the death of lords' and 'the scattering of gems'.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Howarth, *1066*, p. 55

²⁴⁹ Mortimer, *The Man and the Legend*, p. 26.

²⁵⁰ *Vita*, pp. 88-9. The author alludes to Stamford Bridge and Hastings in these lines.



Figure 1. The Anglo-Saxon heptarchy. *Source.* Bartholomew. *A literary & historical atlas of Europe.* 1914.



The earldoms, end 1065. (© Ian W. Walker)

Figure 2. The organization of the earldoms of England in late 1065. *Source.* Walker, I. *Harold: The Last Anglo-Saxon King.* Sutton Publishing, 1997.

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