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D.V. Sukhino-Khomenko

ENGLISH ROYAL EXILES IN RUS AND THE PRACTICE OF EXPATRIATION IN LATE ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

In his letter to Æthelheard (archbishop of Canterbury) and Ceolwulf (bishop of Lindsey) about Hringstan, an Anglo-Saxon exile in Francia, written at the close of the 8th century, Charlemagne briefly summarised the motivations for a contemporary noble person to flee: “It is better to live in exile than to perish, to serve in a foreign land than to die in one's own” (Whitelock 1979. P. 849). Two centuries later, driving political and familial rivals into exile appears to have remained a viable method in the contest for power throughout Northern and Eastern Europe. Among others, two English expatriates in particular have attracted interest from historians: Edward the Exile (d. 1057) and Gytha (d. 1098/1107), daughter of Harold son of Godwine, who found themselves temporarily or permanently at the Russian court. What is often not considered is the concurrence with or divergence from the general practice of exile of the time. More surprising is the apparent lack of works that summarise and investigate this phenomenon in Anglo-Saxon England as a whole, though there

have been published assessments of the topic in the Old English poetry (Greenfield 1989), language (van Houts 2004), and law (Sartore 2013). At the same time, these two instances can provide a feasible key to understanding such practice and its governing mechanisms, for they vividly illustrate the two types of deportation: forced banishment and ‘voluntary’ flight.

As said, their journeys, perhaps the best recorded for the whole period, have been thoroughly studied before by both Russian and European scholars (Lind 1992; Ronay 1989 – see, however, harsh critique in: Reuter 1993; Пашуто 1968; Назаренко 2001; Мельникова 2016; et al.), so we shall only retell their biographies briefly.

Edward was a son of King Edmund Ironside, defeated at Ashington by the Danish king Cnut on October 18th, 1016. Edmund died six weeks after the battle, and Edward, his brother, and uncle Eadwig were left at Cnut’s mercy. Next year, Cnut outlawed Eadwig and, probably, had him killed, but the princely infants were spared: presumably, under supervision of a certain Walgar they were sent to the Swedish king Olaf *Skötkonung*, half- or stepbrother of Cnut’s. Despite his relation and political alliance with Cnut, Olaf refused to murder them and instead sent them further east to the court of Yaroslav, prince of Novgorod at the time. Yaroslav was also Olaf’s ally, yet for some reason the princes survived once again, and were at some point transferred to Hungary (Melnikova suggests an earlier date, given Yaroslav’s indirect amity with Cnut, but Ronay advocates for 1046 when another exile at Yaroslav’s court, the Hungarian prince Andrew, reclaimed his kingdom). In 1054, on the order of the English king Edward the Confessor, half-brother of Edmund Ironside, bishop Ealdred of Worcester was assigned to fetch the king’s nephew from the continent (Edward’s brother had already died), but failed. A new mission, likely led by the king’s brother-in-law, earl Harold, son of Godwine, recovered Edward in 1057, but he died almost immediately upon his return, leaving a young son Edgar (Walker 1997. P. 92–95).

Gytha’s exact date of birth is unknown, but in all likelihood, she was in her late teens when her father lost the battle of Hastings and his life to William the Conqueror on October 14th, 1066. Thereafter, as hypothesised by Ian Walker, she and her grandmother fled to the Isle of Flat Holm after William had crushed the Exeter rebellion in 1068, and a year later the noble women left England for Flanders,

where they found refuge at the court of Count Baldwin VI, their in-law via the marriage of Harold's brother Tostig to Baldwin's aunt (Walker 1997. P. 213, 216–218). From there Gytha's exiled brothers must have brought her to their cousin once removed, King Sven Estridsson of Denmark, who died in mid-1070s. Around this time, she married the Russian prince of Smolensk, Vladimir Monomakh, and in 1076 produced a son, Mstislav, also known as Harald in western sources. Mstislav's grandchild, son of Knud *Lavard*, became the Danish king Valdemar I in 1154. Gytha is believed to have died on May 7th, 1107, but Nazarenko maintains Gytha's passing on March 10th, 1098, on her way to Jerusalem (Назаренко 2001. С. 632).

Between 600 and 1066, at least 26 kings out of 145 known Anglo-Saxon monarchs suffered expulsion, and only half of them were later restored (White 2012. P. 5). The statistics for the 10–11th century political and familial strife look as follows:

- 22 noblemen and royalty were driven into exile (some more than once), mostly through outlawry, 10 of which later reconciled with their opponents;
- 15 noblemen and royalty had to flee, only 5 of which managed to return;
- 14 men (3 of royal blood) were murdered;
- 4 men were mutilated (blinded).

(NB: these figures have been gathered from the most reliable major contemporary sources and modern historiography, but they still might not be exhaustive; ecclesiastical exiles have not been included in the list either).

Each expatriate about whose destination we have knowledge fled to his/her relatives or allies, which is hardly surprising. Unsurprisingly, fewer such conflicts are known from before the Danish conquest in the 1000s, though the preceding period was not devoid of political or personal conflict (e.g. King Edmund was murdered in 946; and according to 12th century testimonies, King Edgar had his second wife's first husband killed in 964). Three observations, however, require further consideration.

First, it is noteworthy that apart from earl Waltheof, who conspired against William the Conqueror in 1076, and Ulf, who joined Cnut's adversaries in 1026, Anglo-Saxon politics, it appears, knew no legal executions, and even outright murder seems an oddity. Cnut might have sentenced the victims in 1017, but no details are availa-

ble: the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* merely states that the noblemen were killed (murdered?). It is all the more curious, since capital punishment had long been established in the Anglo-Saxon law, including for such crimes as plotting a king's murder (Глебов 1997). For example, since in 1055 earl Ælfgar was accused of "betraying the king and all the people", one could expect capital penance, not just outlawry. It could be ascribed to the effect of Christian teaching (Marafioti 2008), yet royal violence as a punitive measure was not uncommon: in 1002, King Æthelred, fearing for his life, ordered an onslaught of the Danes in his realm; in 1041, King Harthacnut had the town of Worcester harried in penance for the murder of his tax collectors; and in 1051, King Edward ordered earl Godwine to punish the citizens of Dover in the same manner for their quarrel with Eustace of Boulogne (Godwine refused). Connected to this is the second point: mutilation was just as infrequent, and given the known circumstances, all instances could be explained by personal cruelty. And third, despite the relatively high rate of returns, banishment was by far the most common method of repression (imprisonment was not an option, since castles, hence dungeons, were introduced in the country only after the Norman Conquest). Moreover, regardless of the medieval historians' assertions of poisoning or assassination as a means towards political ends in the Anglo-Saxon times, no exile is known to have suffered in this way.

The key to understanding this persistent adherence to outlawry instead of physical liquidation might lie in the case of Edward the Exile. According to John of Worcester, ealdorman Eadric Streona encouraged Cnut to kill not only Eadwig but Edmund Ironside's infant sons as well, but the king "saw great dishonour" in their untimely death and sent them to Sweden (Whitelock 1979. P. 312), apparently with the instructions to execute them upon arrival or at least hold them hostages. John also mentions that the nobility, summoned to swear oaths of allegiance to Cnut, falsely attested an agreement between him and Edmund, in accordance with which Cnut became *aditor et protector* of his rival's children. All things considered, this is an unlikely event (though a somewhat similar succession pact was later reached by two other enemies, Harthacnut of Denmark and Magnus of Norway). In terms of *Realpolitik*, Cnut's 'dishonour' must have clearly meant stirring Edmund's supporters' resentment and a prospect of mutinies in a newly conquered land. This must explain Cnut's unwillingness to eliminate the danger to his power and

choose possible future complications over an immediate threat. His cautiousness proved to be good judgement: even a mere rumour of regicide sure soiled one's reputation, as evidenced by the ill fame of King Æthelred, accused of having conspired his brother's murder in 978, and earl Godwine, charged with killing Edward the Confessor's brother in 1036. Similarly, executing members of influential clans might provoke hostility among the clans' supporters. Thus, even when reinforced by earls Siward and Leofric's troops in his conflict against earl Godwine in 1051, King Edward the Confessor nevertheless demanded all his father-in-law's *thegns*, thereby seeking to deprive him of military and social backing.

Gytha's life story is less obviously typical. On the one hand, most members of the ruling families usually fared well after their exiles. Gytha's grandmother and aunt peacefully retired to Flandres; her sister Gunnhild retreated to the nunnery of Wilton and stayed there unscathed and respected; her half-brother Harold found himself in Norway, later raiding Anglesey with King Magnus Olafsson; Kings Æthelred and Edward the Confessor and Queen Emma eventually returned and ruled once more. On the other hand, Edward the Confessor's brother's attempt to return led to mutilation and death; Cnut's sister Gunnhild's fate is uncertain; and nothing is known of Gytha's brothers after 1070s. What sets the royalty apart from the lesser nobility is the latter's much less desirable fate: apart from Wulfnoth Cild, none of the outlawed made it back, and this could have been another reason for the kings to spare them: considering that we never hear about their ultimate fate, we can assume unenviable ends. Great earls, however, wielded more power and usually fought their ways back (though Tostig lost his life trying), but, as said, the monarchy had few resources to combat them.

Edward the Exile and Gytha's adventurous lives are vivid illustrations of the custom of political exile in late Anglo-Saxon England, and further research into similar practices (see e.g. Taylor 2014; also, *nota bene* the Conference on Peacemaking and the Restraint of Violence in Medieval Europe (1100–1300), University of Bergen, February 22–23rd, 2018) in closely connected Rus' and Scandinavia (see e.g.: Джаксон 2000) is very welcomed.

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ОГЛАВЛЕНИЕ

Алексеевко Н.А. Политико-административные, финансово-экономические и церковные связи византийского Херсона по данным памятников сфрагистики	5
Андрейчева М.Ю. «Стояще бес пояса»: моление мусульман в «Повести временных лет»	8
Артамонов Ю.А. Византийский опыт организации «двойных» монастырей в Древней Руси	12
Арутюнова-Фиданян В.А. Контакты Древней Руси и Армении: начало	15
Ауров О.В. “Era natural de Greçia...”: Византия и византийцы в кастильских и леонских хрониках XIII в.	21
Брахман А.А. <i>Legatio ad imperatorem constantinopolitanum Nicephorum Phokam pro Ottonibus augustis et Adelheida</i> Лиутпранда Кремонского: Круг адресатов и цели создания	26
Бубенок О.Б. Аланы Северного Кавказа в истории Руси после хазарского периода	32
Вдовченков Е.В. Этническая и политическая ситуация в Подонье и Северном Приазовье по данным Певтингеровой карты	36
Вершинин К.В. Неизвестный древнерусский перевод (анонимные схолии на Ветхий Завет)	41
Вин Ю.Я. Рецепция понятий и терминов византийского права у средневековых южных славян и в Русском государстве: культурные начала	46
Виноградов А.Ю., Коробов М.И. Новые данные о ранней истории христианства у горнокрымских готов	50
Виноградов Ю.А. Политическая ситуация в Средиземноморье и особенности культуры элиты Боспора Киммерийского в доримскую эпоху	55
Ганина Н.А. Любекское право в Балтийском регионе: распространение и взаимосвязи рукописной традиции	60
Гимон Т.В. К вопросу о княжеских посланиях в Киевском своде (XII в.)	64
Горский А.А. К вопросу о династических связях первых московских князей	71
Грацианская Л.И. Творческая лаборатория Страбона	77

<i>Денисов С.А.</i> Положение прусской знати в Тевтонском государстве в XIII в.	79
<i>Джаксон Т.Н.</i> Еще раз о русской жене датского короля Вальдемара I: историографический комментарий к одному месту из «Внешней политики» В.Т. Пашуто	83
<i>Добровольский Д.А.</i> «Слово о вере христианской и о латинской» в историческом контексте середины XII в.	88
<i>Домбровский Д.</i> Использование жестов в дипломатической практике Галицко-Волынской Руси	93
<i>Дробышев М.И.</i> Этноним οἱ Νέμτιζοι в византийской историографии и актах X–XII вв.	96
<i>Дружинина И.А.</i> К этнокультурной характеристике населения Северо-Западного Кавказа XI–XIII вв. (по материалам погребального обряда)	104
<i>Ермолова И.Е.</i> Политические интересы поздней Римской империи в Северном Причерноморье	108
<i>Земляков М.В.</i> Франкские короли и славянские племена в анналистике середины VII – начала IX в.: дипломатические союзы, военные конфликты и их последствия	113
<i>Иванов С.А.</i> Нашествие Святослава на Византию в Житии Нифонта Константианского	118
<i>Илюшечкина Е.В.</i> Риторический топос о «скифском» севере в компиляции Солина	123
<i>Казанский М.М.</i> Военная политика Юстиниана и готы на Боспоре Киммерийском	127
<i>Калинина Т.М.</i> Ибн Хаукал и Хасдай ибн Шапрут	130
<i>Каиштанов С.М., Столярова Л.В.</i> Еще раз о загадке Мстиславовой грамоты	135
<i>Кибинь А.С.</i> Притъча «погибоша аки объри» и пророчество Псевдо-Мефодия	144
<i>Конявская Е.Л.</i> Внешнеполитические действия смоленских князей (по летописным данным середины – второй половины XII в.)	149
<i>Короленков А.В.</i> Последние замыслы Митридата VI	154
<i>Котляр Н.Ф.</i> К истории общественно-политической жизни Руси XII–XIII вв.	159

Котышев Д.М. Внутри- и внешнеполитические аспекты развития Русской земли конца X – начала XI в.	163
Кузнецов А.А. Особенности имперской дипломатии в практиках Владимирского княжества	165
Кулешов Вяч.С. Денежное обращение, монетная чеканка и политогенез в эпоху викингов: проблема корреляции	171
Лавренченко М.Л. Третейский суд «чужого» родственника: Пясты и Рюриковичи в XII в.	176
Лаушкин А.В. К вопросу об изображении авторами Галицко-Волынской летописи русско-монгольских отношений в период после Батыева нашествия	181
Литовских Е.В. Древнерусско-исландские связи в X–XIII вв.: Бьёрн-Шкура «Ездок в Новгород»	183
Лукин П.В., Полехов С.В. Латинское послание о новгородско-ганзейских переговорах 1292 г. и некоторые аспекты социально-политической истории Восточной Европы в конце XIII в.	189
Матузова В.И. Тевтонский орден в Венгрии (XIII в.)	195
Macháček Jiří. Great Moravia – Independent Slavic Kingdom or Frankish March? An Archaeological View	200
Мельникова Е.А. Тайная дипломатия Ярослава Мудрого	205
Мозаричев Ю.М. История средневекового Крыма в трудах В.Т. Пашуто	210
Науменко В.Е. Древнерусский фактор в истории Византийской Таврики X в.: от известных фактов к новым гипотезам	215
Никольский И.М. Культ Дианы Арицийской в «Географии» Страбона: видел ли автор в нем скифские корни?	220
Пашинский В.М. Метод определения минимального среднего времени обращения монет на рынке (на примере куфических дирхамов в Восточной Европе X в.)	224
Петров Н.И. Микула Чудин или Чудин Микула?	228
Петрухин В.Я. В.Т. Пашуто о древнерусской практике ряда	233
Подберёзкин Ф.Д. Рюриковичи и Буксгевдены: из истории династических связей псковских князей Владимира Мстиславича и Ярослава Владимировича с Ливонией	238
Подосинов А.В. Греки, римляне и варвары на Нижнем Дунае в начале I в. н.э. (свидетельства Овидия и местной эпиграфики)	242

Полонский Д.Г. Антилатинская полемика в Киеве XII в. и деятельность Феодосия «Грека» в контексте политики князя Изяслава Мстиславича	247
Пчелов Е.В. Двуглавые орлы Древней Руси в контексте ее внешнеполитических связей	252
Рашковский Б.Е. Русы, хазары и реки Восточной Европы в арабском переводе книги Иосиппон и еврейско-хазарской переписке	257
Скржинская М.В. Скифы в Ольвии	260
Ставиский В.И. К истории одного паломничества	266
Stepanov Tsvetelin. Trade and Dependence: Between Historical Facts and Historical Memory about the Bulgaro-Khazar Relations, the 9 th –10 th Centuries	271
Стефанович П.С. Разное отношение к половцам и печенегам в начальном летописании	275
Суриков И.Е. Древнегреческая цивилизация как система связей	279
Sukhino-Khomenko D.V. English Royal Exiles in Rus and the Practice of Expatriation in Late Anglo-Saxon England	284
Sîrbu Valeriu. Originality of the Thracian Art (4 th –3 rd Centuries B.C.) between the Carpathian and the Balkan Mountains	289
Темчин С.Ю. Кушито-Химьяритская параллель (первая половина VI в.) к поставлению киевских митрополитов в обход Константинополя (1051 и 1147 гг.)	293
Тишин В.В. К тюркской этимологии названия «Матери городов русских» (замечания к гипотезе С.Г. Кляшторного)	+++ ++ 297
Флёров В.С. Славянские поселения на Нижнем Дону в конце VIII – X в. по данным археологии	302
Фонт М. Королевские супруги на Галичине: Венгерский Колман и Саломея Пястовна	307
Франчук В.Ю. Документальная основа летописи Изяслава Мстиславича	315
Храпачевский Р.П. Первые столкновения Руси с практикой монгольской «дипломатии»	320
Храпунов Н.И. Знали ли варвары, что такое деньги? Некоторые наблюдения над монетным обращением в Таврике позднеримского времени	323

<i>Цукерман К.</i> 1108 лет русского присутствия в Латакии	327
<i>Чичко Т.В.</i> Торговые связи угров-мадьяр (Magna Hungaria) до периода обретения родины (конец VII – первая половина IX в.)	332
<i>Чахидзе В.Н.</i> Матарха-Тмутаракань – между Византией и Русью: проблемы политико-административного статуса	337
<i>Шинаков Е.А.</i> Лучевые височные кольца в контексте кросс-культурных связей Восточной Европы раннего Средневековья	342
<i>Шорохов В.А., Кибинь А.С.</i> Три царя ас-сакалиба в трактате ал-Мас'уди «Золотые копи и россыпи самоцветов»	347
<i>Шувалов П.В.</i> Бесписьменный Север: венеты Галлии и венецы Балтики	351
<i>Шавелев А.С.</i> Даты договоров Византии и Руси X в.	354
<i>Юрасов М.К.</i> Венгерский анклав в Юго-Западной Руси в первой половине X в.	361
<i>Юсупович А.</i> Великокняжеский киевский свод 1238 г. в Галицко-Волынской хронике	363
<i>Ярцев С.В., Шушунова Е.В.</i> Культурные связи городища «Белинское» в Восточном Крыму в первых веках н.э.	367
Сведения об авторах	372
Список принятых сокращений	378