

Fan Cun-zhong

英国史提纲

ENGLISH HISTORY

A BRIEF OUTLINE

四川人民出版社

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范存忠 编著

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CHAPTER I

BEFORE THE NORMAN CONQUEST

55 B.C. -- 54 B.C.	Julius Caesar invaded Britain
43	Roman conquest of Britain
C. 410	End of the Roman rule of Britain
C. 449	Angles, Saxons and Jutes landed in Britain
579	Christian mission came from Rome
787	Danish invasions began
1017-42	Danish dynasty in England

I CELTIC BRITAIN AND ROMAN BRITAIN

1. **Celtic Britain** Many tribes or races had settled in Britain before the Angle-Saxons came in the middle of the 5th century. The Celts were one of the early settlers. They came in several successive waves from the Upper Rhineland and began to inhabit Britain in about the 7th century B.C. They were tribesmen or clansmen, each tribe or clan under a petty chief or king. They lived in small huts of wood, or of reeds woven together and plastered with

mud or clay. They knew hunting, herding, weaving bee-keeping, and the cultivation of wheat, oats and barley. There was no union among the tribes, and wars were frequent.

In 55 and 54 B.C. Britain was twice invaded by Roman troops under Julius Caesar. In 43 A.D. it was conquered by the Romans under Claudius. Britain became a Roman province, and so it remained until the beginning of the 5th century.

2. Roman Britain The Romans were empire builders. For military purposes they built roads, some of which are still used as trackways (e.g. Watling Street). They built walls. Particularly notable is the wall of Hadrian from Solway to Tyne. On the strategic spots they built garrisons, some of which grew up as cities and towns. They built villas, i.e. great estates cultivated by slave labour. They built Roman temples, baths, and occasional theatres. Attempts were made to Romanize Britain.

Most Britons under the Romans were either slaves or unfree tillers of the soil. The Roman officials, military or civil, and the Roman landowners who lived in the villas cared little for the welfare of the people. Resistance or revolts were sternly put down. Heavy taxes were imposed upon the native population--land tax, poll tax, wheat tax, customs duties.

The Roman rule of Britain ended by 410.

II ANGLO-SAXON ENGLAND

3. Anglo-Saxon Settlement From the middle of the 5th century (traditional date 449) three Teutonic groups began to migrate from the region of Denmark and the Low Countries and settled in Britain. The Jutes took the southeast (Kent); the Saxons established themselves in the south and west (Sussex and Wessex); and the Angles occupied the east coast and established a kingdom north of the Humber. As they were barbarians, they destroyed much that the Romans had built. The Celts were driven westward, to Wales and Cornwall, and some of the fugitives crossed the Channel and settled in French Brittany.

From the Anglo-Saxon conquerors come the names England and English. England (Angla-land) means the land of the Anglo-Saxons, collectively known as Angles.

The Anglo-Saxons were tribes who had developed from pasture farming to settled agriculture. They were mostly freemen, although they had the conquered Celts as slaves. Their social unit was not kinsfolk, but the village. Private ownership had come into existence, but everybody was subject to a great

deal of control by the village as a whole. For example, the crops to be planted were determined in the village meeting, and each occupier was bound to follow the decisions of the group. Thus in the tribal life of the people there existed traces of the primitive communal society.

4. Introduction of Christianity The early Anglo-Saxons were worshippers of natural forces; e.g. thunder, winds, storms, etc. "Religion arose in very primitive times from erroneous, primitive conceptions of men about their own nature and external nature surrounding them." (Engels)

In 597 a Christian mission under Augustine came from Rome. The Teutonic outlook upon life and their habit of mind were entirely different from Christian teachings. But the missionaries were extremely aggressive personalities. Whether by diplomacy or by persuasion, they succeeded in converting one tribal leader after another. The process was gradual. But by the end of the 7th century all England had been Christianized.

The interest of the Christian missionaries coincided with the interest of the tribal chiefs and noblemen of the Anglo-Saxons. The missionaries were given gifts of land. They built churches and chapels, and they taught the people to be meek and obedient,

to put up with the sufferings of the present world. They gave active support to the private ownership of land and helped to strengthen the power of the rulers and nobles. By 737 the church of England had been well organized. It furnished a model of unity in the midst of separation and disorder, and its activities hastened the growth of feudalism.

5. Anglo-Saxon Kingdoms As time went on, the Anglo-Saxon tribes combined to form small kingdoms. Seven of these are eventually recognized: Northumbria, Mercia, East Anglia, Kent, Essex, Sussex, and Wessex are spoken of as the Anglo-Saxon Heptarchy. But the grouping was not very permanent. Sometimes two or more kingdoms were united under one king, at other times one kingdom was divided under separate rulers.

In the early part of the 7th century Northumbria gained political supremacy over a number of other kingdoms. In the 8th century this leadership passed to Mercia. Finally, in the 9th century, Wessex under Egbert (802-39) began to extend its influence and in 830 all England, including the chieftains of Wales, acknowledged Egbert's overlordship. And under Alfred the Great (871-901) Wessex attained a high degree of prosperity and considerable enlightenment.

6. Danish Invasions The Danes, or Scandinavians, were one-time neighbours of the Anglo-Saxon tribes on the Continent, and related to them in language and blood. In the late 8th century they began to attack the English coast. In the late 9th century they made extensive settlements in the eastern half of the island, and turned their attention to Wessex. For 7 years the West Saxons, under the leadership of King Alfred the Great, offered resistance, and their courage and persistence triumphed. In 878 a treaty was signed between the Danes and Alfred; the eastern half of the island was to be subject to the Danish law and was known as the Danelaw.

In 1014 Sweyn and Cnut of the Danes scored a series of victories in different parts of England and finally seized the throne. From 1017 to 1042 England was ruled by Danish kings.

The Danes were a sea-faring people. They opened up new trade routes to the Continent--to Scandinavia, to France, to the Mediterranean. By the beginning of the 11th century, England imported furs, skins, weapons, iron work, clothes, glass, etc. from abroad, and exported tin, lead, wool -- and slaves. The slave trade, which had existed in Celtic Britain, was carried on extensively till the close of the 12th century.

7. Development of Feudalism In early Saxon England, the main classes of people were: (1) noblemen, with the king at the top; (2) freemen; and (3) slaves. The noblemen were supposed to be descendants of gods. The freemen were independent peasants, holding large pieces of land. They formed the basic mass of the inhabitants. The slaves did not hold any land, but tilled the land of the noblemen. Probably, they came from the conquered Celts.

Gradually, changes took place in social relations. The development of agriculture and trade stimulated production and resulted in the accumulation of wealth in a few hands. Some came to hold more land than most of his fellow people.

By the 10th century, a new aristocracy, the thegn (i.e. lord), had appeared. The thegn, originally a retainer of the king or some nobleman, was frequently given a gift of land for his service. In the years of wars and invasions, the thegn became particularly important, as his service was most needed.

In the 11th century, the noble classes, whether by blood or through service, were supposed to be protectors of the ordinary people, and for this reason came to exercise economic control and judicial power over the classes below them. It was laid down as a rule of law and police that "every man must have a lord." The old system of clans and kinship had been

completely displaced by the new system of lords and tenants. At the head of the state was the king. Next to the king was the earl, who ruled many districts. Next to the earl was the thegn, who had become a territorial noble. Below the thegns stood a small class of freemen, who acknowledged the thegns as lords. Further down were serfs, who were bound to the soil.

But the process of feudalism was not completed until after the Norman Conquest.

III CIVILIZATION OF THE ANGLO-SAXON PERIOD

8. Monasteries and Monastic Culture After the introduction of Christianity, churches were built and monasteries established. Schools were set up in most of the monasteries and larger churches, where theology was taught and religious discipline exercised. The intellectual life of the people was controlled by the monasteries and churches.

In the monasteries and churches, manuscripts were copied, historical records made, and saints' legends (i.e. superstitious stories) invented. Among the monastic scholars Latin was more used than English. Certain aspects of the classical civilization were

preserved in the interests of the Church and the feudal rulers.

The best product of Anglo-Saxon monastic culture was the Venerable Bede (673-735), a monk at Jarrow. He was the scholar of the age, and had a European reputation in his life-time and long afterwards. He had forty works, all in Latin, to his credit. His best-known work is the "Ecclesiastical History of the English people" (731), which tells us more about early English life than any other work of the period.

9. Anglo-Saxon Literature From the middle of the 5th century to the Norman Conquest, there were two marked periods of enlightenment; one was the age of Bede in the earlier 8th century, and the other the age of Alfred in the later 9th century. King Alfred was a remarkable scholar as well as a good soldier. For the education of his people, he had a number of Latin works translated into English, including Bede's "Ecclesiastical History". He renewed and set going the "Old English Chronicle", the first history of an European country written in its own language. Vivid accounts are given there of Alfred's resistance to the Danes.

The most significant work of the Anglo-Saxon period is "Beowulf", the national epic of the English

people. "Beowulf" is a tale of adventures of a mighty champion, who gives his life for his people in a struggle with a monster. Based upon folk legend, it was composed somewhere between 700 and 800. It reflects the life and manners of many centuries from tribalism to early feudalism.

CHAPTER II

FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO
THE MIDDLE OF THE 14th CENTURY

1066-71	Norman Conquest of England
1086	> ^{we} <u>Doomsday</u> Book
1204	King John lost Normandy
1215	King John signed the Magna Carta
1295	The "Model Parliament" was summoned

I THE NORMAN CONQUEST AND
NORMAN FEUDALISM

1. **The Normans and the Norman Conquest** The Normans were bands of Northmen who settled on the northern coast of France in the 9th and 10th centuries, when similar bands were settling in the north and east of England. There they absorbed French culture. They even gave up their own language and learned French. In the 11th century, at the time of the Norman Conquest, the civilization of Normandy was essentially French.

For some time before the Conquest, the relations between England and Normandy had been fairly

close. King Edward the Confessor (1042-1066), who reigned after the Danish line, had been educated in Normandy, his mother being a Norman lady. He was more French than English. A strong French atmosphere pervaded his court during the 24 years of his reign.

In January 1066 Edward died childless. Harold the English earl and Duke William of Normandy both claimed the throne. In September 1066 William crossed the Channel with a formidable force, killed Harold and defeated the English army at the battle of Hastings. The conquest of England was complete by 1071.

2. Feudalism after the Norman Conquest Upon the Conquest the old English nobility, lay and clerical, was practically wiped out. A great deal of English land passed into William the Conqueror's hand. Much of it he bestowed upon his Norman followers, but he owned almost all the forests and about $1/7$ of the cultivated land of England.

The lands that William gave to his followers were called fiefs, and the recipients of the lands were called vassals. The vassals could sub-divide their fiefs into smaller fiefs and bestowed them upon their own followers. The king was lord to his vassals, who in

turn were lords to their tenants. Thus a new, and more elaborate, hierarchy of nobility came into being.

William the Conqueror required not only his vassals but also the vassals of his vassals to take an oath that they would be faithful to him against all other men. This pledge bound the vassals directly to the king even against their immediate feudal lords. Thus the feudal system of England acquired a more centralized character than in other European countries of the time.

In 1086 William the Conqueror had his officials go through England and made a record of each man's property. With this record at his elbow he could tell how much each man should or could pay. The people viewed the record with so much superstitious fear that they called it Domesday Book.

The Domesday Book is of high historical value. The total population of England was about two millions, of which 9% were slaves, less than 12% were freemen, 80% were villeins or serfs. It is shown that most of the Anglo-Saxon freemen had been degraded into the status of villeins, "owning nothing but their own bellies". Serfdom was greatly developed after the Norman Conquest.

3. Conflicts between King and Vassals In spite of