

XIV.—THE BEORNICAS AND THE DERAS.

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The question of the exact limits of the northern and the southern kingdoms or provinces of the ancient Northumberland is one of those complications in regard to which nearly all the so-called authorities may be said to be equally right or equally wrong, according to the point of view chosen.

To begin with, we are probably all of us wrong (I plead guilty, most guilty, myself) in using the terms Bernicia and Deira at all, and still more wrong, if it be possible, in employing those of 'Bernicians' and 'Deirans.' The idea that there were two British states previous to the English conquest called Deifyr and Berneich seems to have arisen partly from a late Celtic mistranslation, and partly from a confusion with the states of Brecknock and Dyfed, in South Wales.¹ Neither the Venerable Bede, nor Eddi the biographer of St. Wilfrid, knows aught of a Bernicia or a Deira. With St. Bede the uniform expressions are 'the kingdom (or the province) of the Bernicii' and 'the kingdom (or the province) of the Deiri'; so, too, Egfrid and Alfrid are by Eddi styled kings, not of Bernicia and Deira, but of the Deiri and the Bernicii.

It is certain that the name 'Deira' cannot have been current in St. Bede's time, otherwise he surely would have used it to give greater point to St. Gregory's prophetic pun in the beautiful story of the English boys in the Roman slave mart. 'What is the name of the pro-

¹ The gloss in the *Historia Nennii*, cap. lxvi. 'Ida . . . junxit arcem, id est, Dinguerin et Gurbirneith: quae duae regiones fuerunt in una regione, id est Deur a Berneth, Anglice Deira et Bernicia' (*M.H.B.* p. 74), is both corrupt and comparatively modern. It confuses the building of Bamburgh with the consolidation of the three separate states, 'Dynguyrddi, Gunerth, and Berneich,' mentioned in a subsequent gloss (*M.H.B.* p. 75). In the Book of Aneurin we meet with passages like 'pym pymwnt . . . o wyr deivyr a brennych' ('five battalions of the men of Deivyr and Brennych') in connection with the battle of Catraeth (Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, ii. p. 64); but 'deivyr' and 'brennych' may refer simply to rivers and mountains, and these poems can hardly establish points that are against the weight of more definite historical evidence.

vince from which they have been carried off?' asked the future pontiff, then a simple monk of his own foundation in honour of St. Andrew. 'The inhabitants of the province are called Deiri,' was the reply. 'And rightly Deiri,' he continued, 'since they are plucked from wrath and called to the mercy of Christ—*Deiri, de ira eruti et ad misericordiam Christi vocati.*' Now, had the name Deira been in existence, St. Gregory would at once have been told that the name of the province was Deira, without any cumbrous circumlocution, and he would have said that it was well called 'De-ira.'² Possibly the eventual coining of the name may be traced to this famous incident.

We should then speak in the Latin of the kingdoms of the Bernicii and of the Deiri, and in English of those of the Beornicas and of the Deras. It is extraordinary that Professor Freeman, who would either have swooned or committed manslaughter if anyone had spoken in his presence of Chlodovech or Charles the Great as kings of France, should have laid down a territorial Bernicia and a territorial Deira in his map of Britain in 597.³ The terms Bernicia and Deira were not in use, I believe, to the east of the Severn till after the Norman conquest. Those of 'Bernicians' and 'Deirans' have absolutely no contemporary authority, and as they merely mean 'the inhabitants of the kingdoms of the Beornicas or the Deras,' why not say 'Beornicas' and 'Deras' at once?⁴ The word 'Beornica' may have a queer look before we get accustomed to it; after that it seems no more uncouth than 'Berseker,' or 'Bernese.'

It may be urged, and urged rightly, that we have no more early authority for the terms 'Northumbria' and 'the Northumbrians' than for those of 'Bernicia' and 'the Bernicians.' Bede always speaks of the provinces, race, tribe, kingdom, etc., of the Nordanhymbras,

² This becomes all the more accentuated when we find that Bede, in all probability, altered the more simple setting of the story that he had before him in the old Whitby life of St. Gregory—'Tribus quoque illius nomen de qua erant proprie requisivit. Et dixerunt: '*Deire.*' Et ille dixit: '*De ira Dei confugientes ad fidem.*'—Plummer, *Baedae Opera*, ii. p. 390; Paul Ewald, *Historische Aufsaetze dem Andenken an Georg Waitz gewidmet*, pp. 17-54. It is, no doubt, due to this story that Britain is called 'Deirorum insula' in the eleventh-century chronicle of the monastery of Watten, near Calais.—Plummer, *Baedae Opera*, ii. pp. 23, 72; Pertz, xiv. 164.

³ *Norman Conquest*, i. p. 35. Bede, it will be remembered, often speaks of 'Cantia,' and would have used the expressions Deira and Bernicia had they existed.

⁴ 'Beornicum' and 'Derum' occur as datives plural in the Chronicle (Laud MSS. B), A.D. 678.—Earle, *Two of the Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, p. 41.

provinciae, progenies, gens, regnum, etc., Nordanhymbrorum, never of Northumbria or Northumberland. 'Northumbria' steals in as an adjective in Ethelwerd's chronicle⁵ at the end of the eleventh century, and perhaps its first use by an English pen as a noun is in the entry relating to the year 948 in Symeon of Durham's *Historia Regum*.⁶ 'Northumberland' makes its belated appearance in the line of Gaimar's lay :

Ida rescut Northumberland.⁷

It may be doubted whether it is derived immediately from its position to the north of the river Humber, or indirectly through the tribal name as signifying 'the land of the Northanhymbras.' 'Northumbria' is, of course, mere monkish Latin for 'Northumberland,' and its use can only serve to break the historical continuity subsisting between the ancient kingdom and the modern county. The noun 'Northumbrian' has become part and parcel of our every-day English vocabulary; and though we are learning to speak of 'Bulgars,' 'Wallachs,' etc., instead of 'Bulgarians,' 'Wallachians,' etc., it will be long before we can return to the use of 'Northanhymbra' in ordinary conversation. With 'Bernician' and 'Deiran' it is different: those terms are only employed by persons with some pretensions to historical knowledge, and the sooner they can be supplanted the better.

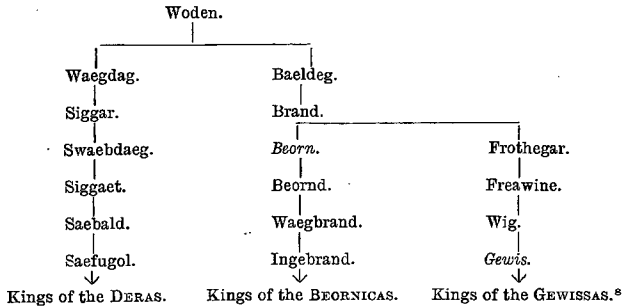
This is not mere pedantry. In order to understand the character of the English conquest of Britain, it is essential to remember that we are concerned with tribes and nations, and not with countries and districts. Ethnology, and not geography, should be our guiding study. During the great epoch of the *Voelkerwanderung*, of which the English conquest supplies a subsidiary chapter, no definite physical boundaries are to be expected, and a search for them is misleading. In the Northumbrian kingdom we should understand that there were two English tribes: the Beornicas, who came south, and the Deras, who came north. Like the Gewissas (or West Saxons), with whose royal house their own was most nearly connected in mythical

⁵ 'Provincia quae dicitur Northanhymbra,' *M.H.B.* p. 504; cf. 'Northymbrias partes,' *ibid.* p. 519.

⁶ '(Edredus) Northumbriam circuiens totam possedit.'—*Symeon of Durham*, *Rolls ed.* ii. p. 94.

⁷ *L'Estorie des Engles*, l. 930; *M.H.B.* p. 776.

genealogy, the Beornicas seem to have derived their name from a common ancestor:—



The cardinal point in the history of Ida—his ‘timbering’ Dinguaroy (the future Bamburgh)—is coupled in Celtic tradition with the statement that he joined Dinguaroy, Guarth, and Berneich,⁹ which shows that the land of the Beornicas was something different from Bamburghshire, at any rate. We gather indirectly that at the time of the mission of St. Paulinus, Glendale, although subject to the Beornicas, in *provincia Berniciorum*,¹⁰ was not yet actually colonised by them. This explains the passage in St. Bede’s account of the battle of Hefenfelth, that until the uplifting of St. Oswald’s cross no cross or altar had been erected among the tribe, in *tota gente Berniciorum*.¹¹ In this there seems to be a careful avoidance of any territorial limits. Edwin extended his suzerainty, no doubt, to the Forth (though Edinburgh may derive its name from some later Edwin), but the Beornicas had remained obdurate pagans.

* Florence of Worcester, *M.H.B.* p. 631. I have seen no notice of the fact that many of the names of the ancestors of the Deras seem to have maritime associations. ‘Siggact’ sounds like sea-goat, ‘saefugol’ like sea-fowl, etc.

⁹ ‘(Ida) unxcit Dynguarði Guuerth—Berneich.’—*Historia Nennii*, *M.H.B.* p. 75. If this refers merely to the ‘timbering’ of Bamburgh, the meaning may be that Dynguarði was the ‘worth’ or palace of the Beornica kings; if it refers to a union of minor states, Guuerth may be Warkworth. In either case the passage cannot be translated ‘Anglice Deira et Bernicia,’ as in cap. lxvi. *M.H.B.* p. 74. See above, note 1.

¹⁰ Baedae, *Hist. Eccl.* ii. cap. xiv. These English ‘provinces’ should not be confounded with the Roman provinces. In lib. iii. cap. xx. for instance, Bede speaks of the ‘provincia Gyruiorum,’ and of the ‘provincia Cantuariorum,’ and no one will argue that Worcestershire and Kent formed two of the five Roman provinces in Britain. The position of the Roman provinces is a most complicated question, and the ordinary spick-and-span delineations of them in ‘ancient atlases’ are perfectly baseless. An appeal to the apocryphal ‘Richard of Cirencester,’ will certainly not identify Valentia with Bede’s ‘province of the Beornicas.’

¹¹ The distinction is marked between ‘the province’ and the *gens* to which it was subject. The *gens* refers to a ruling race like that of the Magyars in Hungary.

With respect to Candida Casa (Whitherne) the reasoning is the same. Like Glendale, it belonged to the province of the Beornicas,¹² but the population of the surrounding country was confessedly Pictish, and the stone church of St. Martin had long been in existence there.

As to the Deras, we know that the site of Beverley was especially called Derawudu, the wood of the Deras;¹³ and that even after Edwin was firmly established in York, the chief temple of the tribal gods still remained at 'Godmundingham.'¹⁴

There is, to my mind, one and only one piece of real evidence as to the usual division between the two tribes after they finally met, and that is the passage in Bede which tells us that Bosa, at York, was bishop in the province of the Deras, while Eata, at Hexham or Lindisfarne, was bishop in the province of the Beornicas.¹⁵ The position of the town or cathedral of Hexham proves nothing, since, except near their mouths, neither the Tees, nor the Tyne, nor the Aln was a rigid boundary, but the extent of the diocese of Hexham seems to prove much, especially when, during its union with that of Lindisfarne, it is definitely included in the province of the Beornicas.¹⁶

¹² 'Qui locus, ad prouinciam Berniciorum pertinens, uulgo uocatur Ad Candidam Casam.'—Baedae, *Hist. Eccl.* iii. cap. iv.; ed. Plummer, i. p. 133.

¹³ 'In Dera uuda, id est in silua Derorum.'—Baedae, *Hist. Eccl.* v. cap. ii, vi.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* ii. cap. xiii. Goodmanham, near Market Weighton, is about twenty miles south-east of York. This points to the advance of the Deras from the south-east, possibly from Flamborough, where the tract, *De Primo Saxonum Adventu*, makes Ida land in the first instance.—*Symeon of Durham*, Rolls ed. ii. p. 374.

¹⁵ 'Substituti episcopi, qui Nordanhymbrorum genti praesent; Bosa, uide licet, qui Derorum, et Eata qui Berniciorum prouinciam gubernaret; hic in ciuitate Eburaci, ille in Hagustaldensi siue in Lindisfarnensi ecclesia cathedram habens episcopalem.'—Baedae, *Hist. Eccl.* iv. cap. xii.; ed. Plummer, i. p. 229; cf. 'man gehalgode ii biscopas . . . Bosan to Derum and Eatan to Beornicum.'—*Saxon Chronicle* (E), ann. 687, ed. Earle, p. 41.

¹⁶ Richard of Hexham states that the diocese of Hexham extended from the Aln to the Tees, and from Wetheral to the sea.—Raine, *Hexham Priory*, i. p. 20. That Wearmouth and Jarrow were in the diocese of Hexham is borne out by the fact that Bede received both deacon's and priest's orders from St. John of Beverley while bishop of Hexham. See Plummer, *Baedae Opera*, i. p. x. n. The consecration of the church of Edlingham by Egred, bishop of Lindisfarne, 831-847 (*Hist. S. Cuthbert*, § 7, *Symeon of Durham*, Rolls ed. i. p. 203), may mark the extinction of the see of Hexham and the southern extension of that of Lindisfarne; but the Coquet, not the Aln, was the old dividing-line between the north and south parts of the county of Northumberland, and the fact that the immense multitude who assisted at the building of Durham and its first cathedral came 'a flumine Coqued usque Tesam,' points to this having been the true limit of the diocese of Hexham.—*Symeon of Durham*, Rolls ed. i. p. 81. Like Eata, Egred probably administered the two dioceses of the Beornicas. On the southern boundary of that of Hexham he not only built the church of Gainford, on the north

The difficulty really is as to the condition of the present county of Durham in early Northumbrian times. Except for the religious settlements along the coast it appears to have been often a complete waste,¹⁷ whether king Finch ruled there or not.¹⁸ St. Cuthbert and his horse would have been starved to death in traversing it if he had not providentially found some food left by the herdsmen in their 'shielings' near Chester-le-Street.¹⁹ It is not until a late period that the three national assemblies held, in all probability, at Finchale,²⁰ point to this having been a central point, if not a common ground, where the Beornicas and the Deras could meet on equal terms.

Such secondary evidences as we do possess are by no means hostile to St. Bede's indication of the Tees as the boundary between the Beornicas and the Deras. The birth of St. Oswin, if it took place at South Shields, affords no evidence of that place—possibly the Roman ARBEIA²¹ and probably the British Caer Urfe²²—having been in the province of the Deras. Edwin must have been king at the time, and the acknowledged supremacy of the Deras over all Northumberland in his reign makes it possible that St. Oswin's father, the future king

bank of the Tees, but the *towns* of Ileclif (Cliffe) and Wigeclife (Wycliffe) south of the river. He also built the *town* of Billingham, in Hartness, which was soon afterwards taken away from the church by king Aella, in about 867. The fact that Aella, though he claimed the rule of all Northumberland, was mainly supported by the Deras, points to Billingham having been in their province. This, however, does not affect Richard of Hexham's general statement as to the line of the Tees. There may have been something peculiar about Billingham, as there was about Cliffe and Wycliffe. I have seen a note of a much later period to the effect that 'Billingham in civilibus ad Eboracum spectat,' but have, unfortunately, lost the reference.

¹⁷ 'Quicquid vero inter Tine vel Tesam flumina exstitit, sola heremi vastitudo tunc temporis fuit, et idcirco nullius ditioni servivit.'—*Vita Oswaldi*, in *Symeon of Durham*, Rolls ed. i. p. 339.

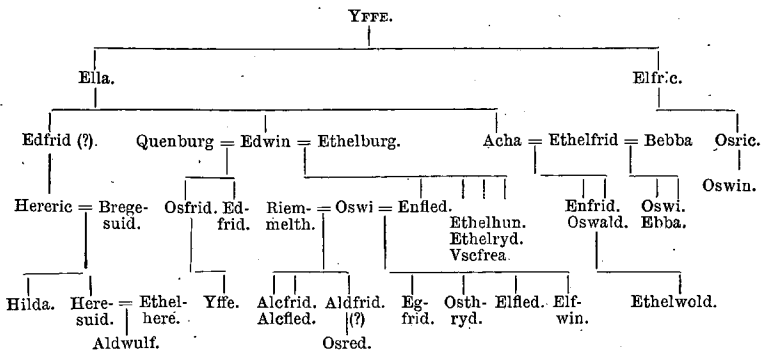
¹⁸ *Finchale Priory*, 20 Surtees Soc. Pub. ¹⁹ *Vita S. Cuthberti*.

²⁰ *Symeon of Durham*, Rolls ed. ii. pp. 43, 51, 59.

²¹ By an error similar to that which made the Danes sail from the sack of Lindisfarne to the Yorkshire Don, instead of to the little stream of that name at Jarrow, the Roman station of DANVM at Jarrow, the Dancaester of Leland, has been confused with one of the same name at Doncaster. All ideas of the second line of defence behind the Wall have thus been vitiated. Chester-le-Street was clearly CONCANGII. ARBEIA, with its *numerus* of bargemen from the Tigris, was probably at the mouth of the Tyne. A bilingual inscription found at South Shields connects it with the far east (see *Arch. Ael.* x. pp. 238-243; also *History of Northumberland*, Elliot Stock, p. 41). I am inclined now to place hypothetically PRAESIDIUM at Piersebridge, and MORBIVM at Greta Bridge (but *not* on account of the resemblance of the names PRAESIDIUM and Piersebridge, and MORBIVM and Mortham). There are reasons for placing DICTIVM on Shields Law.

²² Leland, *Collectanea*.

Osric, may have been only, so to speak, an alien governor among a conquered people. On the other hand, the circumstances connected with St. Oswin's death point to the Tees having been the northern boundary of the kingdom of the Deras in his time, and to his having disbanded his army on reaching it instead of advancing into the territory of Oswi, then king of the Beornicas.²³ The trouble taken to transport St. Oswin's body from Gilling to the fortress-monastery of Tynemouth, where, as in the later cases of the burials of king Osric, brought from Maryport, and of Malcolm Caenmore brought from Alnwick, miracles might be forbidden *par ordinance du roi*, suggests that Tynemouth was well within Beornica territory.

THE ROYAL HOUSE OF THE DERAS.²⁴

So, too, the position of St. Hilda as the heiress of the eldest line of the royal house of the Deras makes it unlikely that her presence was

²³ Oswin dismissed his army 'a loco, qui uocatur Uilfæræsðun, id est mons Uilfari, et est a uico Cataractone X ferme milibus passuum contra solstitialem occasum secretus.' Situated about ten of Bede's miles to the north-west of Catterick, Wilfæræsðun must have been near Barnard Castle, although there is no place of a similar name in the neighbourhood. Historians are too much in the habit of supposing that places never change their names. War had not actually broken out between Oswi and Oswin, and the latter would seem to have sent home his troops instead of leading them across the Tees into the Beornica kingdom.

²⁴ Founded chiefly on the authorities given in Lappenberg (Thorpe's translation, vol. i. pp. 289, 290), but corrected by Nennius, the *Liber Vitae*, etc., especially by comparison of dates of births, marriages, etc. Canon Savage's table, p. 50, is most useful so far as actual statements in Bede are concerned; but it avoids most genealogical difficulties, especially those connected with the double marriages of Ethelfrid and Oswi. The chronology proves that St. Hilda's grandfather must have been an elder brother of Edwin: if his name was Edfrid, it will doubly account for the old mistake that made Hereric the grandson, instead of the nephew, of Edwin.

desired, even by the saintly Oswin, in a kingdom to which she had a better hereditary title. It was not until after the battle of Widwifield had dissipated for ever her nephew Aldwulf's pretensions to the throne of Ella that she was permitted to settle among her own people at Whitby. Her recall to Northumberland and her location at South Shields by St. Aidan was, if it belonged to the Beornicas, as politically wise as it was ecclesiastically advantageous.

With regard to later times, if the Tyne had been the stereotyped boundary between the two sovereign tribes we should have expected to hear that the Danes left Egbert to be the puppet king of the Beornicas, instead of which we read that he was king 'beyond the Tyne.'²⁵ The question of the creation of the Northumbrian earldom is not a simple one. In my small *History of Northumberland*²⁶ I have pointed out that the statement of Wallingford requires to be interpreted in conjunction with that of Hoveden.²⁶ Oswulf's earldom was restricted to 'beyond the Tyne,' Oslac was established at York, and the bishop of Chester-le-Street appears as an important factor in politics, so that we must look for the new earldom created for Edwulf Evilchild in 'the maritime parts of Deira between the Tees and Mirforth' in Cleveland, the name of which first occurs about this time, and which extended in the direction of York as far as Birdforth.

In all of this I may be wrong; if so, I hope to be put right.

²⁵ 'Secundus Ecgbertus regnat super Northumbros ultra amnem Tynæ.'—*Hist. Regum*, A.D. 876, *Symeon of Durham*, Rolls ed. ii. p. 111. The Danish ravages had laid waste all the country as far north as Tynemouth, which accounts for this new division.

²⁶ *History of Northumberland*, Elliot Stock, pp. 98, 99.

²⁷ '(Rex Eadgarus) Osulfi comitatum, quem avunculus ejus Eadredus toti Northimbriæ sub nomine comitis præfecerat, in duos divisit comitatus. Ipso Osulfo jam mortuo, noluit sub nomine hæreditatis Rex eam partem terræ alicui provenire soli, ne ad antiquam libertatem aspirantes Northimbriæ, hoc est ab Humbria usque ad Theisam Oslach et comitis gladio eum cinxit. A Theisa vero usque ad Mireforth sub nomine etiam comitatus, partem videlicet maritimam Deiræ dedit Eadulf cognomento Ewelthild. Sicque duo Regna ad duos comitatus devenerunt.'—*Chronica Johannis Wallingford*; Gale, *Herum Anglicarum Scriptores*, iii. p. 544. 'Deinde Osulfus ad aquilonem plagam Tinæ, Oslac vero super Eboracum et ejus fines, curas administrabat.'—*Chronica Rogeri de Hoveden*, Rolls ed. i. p. 57. On any hypothesis, the passage in Wallingford is corrupt, and is of very late date. 'Mireforth' is, of course, identified with the Firth of Forth, but Birdforth may have been confused with it.