I.—THE ORIGINS OF NORTHUMBRIA.

By Peter Hunter Blair.

1. *The Gildas Tradition.*

The historian who sets out to make an inquiry into the origins of Northumbria is much in the position of a man who tries to journey by night across the sands from Holy Island to the mainland opposite. He knows that there are guide-posts which will help him on his way if he can find them, and he knows also that if he strays from the track which they mark, he will do so at the risk of being swallowed in quicksands. The kingdom of Northumbria[1] came into being about the year 600 through the forcible coalescence of two originally separate units, the kingdoms of Bernicia and Deira. Bernicia was founded in 547.[2] So much is beyond reasonable doubt, even if the circumstances of its foundation are mere conjecture. But when we seek to determine even the date, much less the circumstances, of Deira's foundation, we find ourselves leaving firm ground behind with an uneasy awareness that we shall not reach it again until we have been carried back beyond the last days of Roman Britain. To disregard this period of uncertainty between Roman Britain and English Northumbria might, indeed, be the easiest course, but it could not fail

[1] The substance of this paper was read at a meeting of the *Arch. Inst.* in Burlington House 3 April 1946. I am grateful to Dr. I. A. Richmond and Prof. C. F. C. Hawkes for helpful criticism on several points, though I have not always agreed with their views. My debt to Prof. H. M. Chadwick has accumulated for many years and is now unhappily beyond repayment. I alone, however, am responsible for the views I have expressed.

[2] Bede, *HE* v, 24. I hope to show elsewhere how this date was calculated.

to give a seriously distorted view of Northumbrian history as a whole. There is no justification for assuming from the comparative lack of evidence that this interval was a period of quiescence or of political stagnation. On the contrary, there is every indication that it was one of great vitality and of profound political changes whose consequences could not but greatly affect the course of later Northumbrian history.

Opinions about the merits of Gildas as a historian have varied greatly. For himself he never claimed that his work *De Excidio et Conquestu Britanniae*[3] was anything more than a letter or an admonishment (*admonitiuncula*).[4] Bede called him *historicus*,[5] and many other writers of the middle ages followed Bede's example. Modern writers have tended to regard Gildas as prophet and preacher rather than as historian,[6] but of late there has been a growing realization that, whether prophet or historian, Gildas was a contemporary witness of a very obscure period in the history of Britain, and that therefore his work deserves to be taken seriously.[7] He was by far the earliest writer to attempt a rational account of events in Britain between the end of the Roman and the beginning of the English periods, and furthermore his work served as the main source of information for later writers attempting the same task. To a large extent its errors and obscurities are due to the efforts of its author to produce a connected narrative despite the gaps in his sources, especially the native sources, of which he himself complained.[8]

[3] Ed. T. Mommsen, *MGH Auct. Antiquiss.*, XIII, 1-85, also H. Williams, with translation and notes, in *Cymmrodorion Record Series*, no. 3. The work is cited hereafter as *Exc.*

[4] *Exc.* 1.

[5] *HE* I, 22.

[6] So Sir John Lloyd, *A History of Wales*, 3rd ed., 139.

[7] Cf. C. E. Stevens, *Gildas Sapiens*, *EHR* 56, 353-73, and F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 2.

[8] *Exc.* 4—*quantum tam potuero, non tam ex scriptis patriae scriptorumve monimentis, quippe quae, vel si qua fuerint, aut ignibus hostium exusta aut civium exilii classe longius deportata non compareant, quam transmarina relatione, quae crebris inrupta intercapedinibus non satis claret.*

The first stage in the inquiry must, therefore, be to consider what Gildas wrote about events in Britain, and more particularly in northern Britain, at the end of the Roman period. The expedition of Magnus Maximus to the continent, he wrote, robbed Britain of all her armed forces and the country, which was completely ignorant of the practice of war, was then left exposed for the first time to the ravages of two foreign tribes, the Scots from the north-west and the Picts from the north.[9] In answer to an urgent appeal for help the Romans sent a legion to Britain, and after driving off the invaders, they told the inhabitants to build a wall across the island between the two seas as a protection. This they did; but it was no use because it was built of turf.[10] As soon as the legions had gone, the old enemies came back across the sea and a second appeal for help was sent to the Romans. The appeal was answered, the enemies were again defeated and a second wall was built, but this time by the Romans themselves in their accustomed mode of structure.[11] At the same time towers were built along the southern shores of Britain as a protection against dangers threatening from that quarter. The Romans then urged the Britons to look to their own defence, and after leaving behind them patterns for the manufacture of arms, they departed as people who never intended to return.[12] As soon as the Romans had gone the Scots and Picts came back[13] and seized the whole northern part of the land as far as the wall. The Britons tried to hold back the enemy by manning their fortifications, but the invaders broke through and the Britons abandoned their wall and their cities. To these external disasters were added further troubles caused by tumults within, and in their distress they sent a third appeal to the Romans, addressing it to Aetius in his third consul-

[9] *Exc.* 14.
[10] *Exc.* 15.
[11] *Exc.* 18—*solito structurae more*, which may be taken to mean that this second wall was of stone.
[12] *Exc.* 17, 18.
[13] *Exc.* 19.

ship. The appeal was not answered. Some of the Britons gave up the fight, but others fought on and inflicted a severe defeat on their enemies.[14] Soon after, the Scots—or the shameless Irish attackers, as Gildas calls them here[15]—went home, to return again before long. Of the Picts he says that then and long afterwards they settled down in the furthermost part of the island with occasional pillaging and devastation.[16]

After their victory the Britons entered upon a period of prosperity. Gildas indicates that this period lasted a considerable time, and although it was not a kind of prosperity of which he could approve, he admits that it was an age of such wealth as none who came after could remember.[17] In due course the threat of invasion was renewed and was accompanied by a deadly pestilence. To meet these new perils the proud tyrant[18] and his councillors decided to invite the Saxons into Britain in order that they might repel the invaders from the north. Three shiploads of Saxons arrived, and on the instructions of the tyrant they first settled in the eastern part of the island. When news of the success of their expedition reached their homeland, another contingent was sent and the Britons supplied them with provisions as if they had been soldiers about to fight for their hosts. All went well for a time, but eventually there was a dispute about their rations, and finally the Saxons revolted, causing widespread destruction all over the island from sea to sea.[19] After a while some of the Saxons returned home and the Britons, led by Ambrosius Aurelianus, won

[14] *Exc.* 20.

[15] *Exc.* 21—*impudentes grassatores Hiberni.*

[16] *Exc.* 21—*Picti in extrema parte insulae tunc primum et deinceps requieverunt, praedas et contritiones nonnunquam facientes.* Williams, *op. cit.*, translates, "began their successive settlements," implying that these Picts were new settlers from elsewhere. This is not in keeping with the interpretation which Bede seems to give to this passage, *HE* I, 14—*Picti in extrema parte insulae tunc primum et deinceps quieverunt, praedas tamen nonnunquam exinde et contritiones de Brettonum gente agere non cessarunt.*

[17] *Exc.* 21.

[18] *Exc.* 23—*superbus tyrannus.* Gildas does not give his name.

[19] *Exc.* 23-4.

a victory over those that remained.[20] From that time sometimes the citizens, sometimes the enemy were victorious until the siege of *Mons Badonicus*.

This narrative is sufficiently convincing in its broad outlines to justify the belief that it contains some truth, but in its details it presents two major difficulties which have done much to discredit it as a whole. The turf wall is stated to have been built after the departure of Magnus Maximus, and the stone wall at some unstated time after the turf wall. Gildas has certainly made a serious blunder, but his failure to solve an archæological problem of which the solution is scarcely complete even yet, is not an adequate reason for rejecting all his information on other topics. The correspondence of archæological and other evidence with details in his account of the building of the two walls suggests with some force that he was less mistaken than he appears to have been, and that the two appeals to Rome and the results which flowed from them should be taken to represent the reorganization of the Roman defences of Britain in 369 and again after 383.[21] The second difficulty lies in the appeal which the Britons are alleged to have addressed to Aetius in his third consulship. Gildas does not precisely state the cause of the trouble which led to the sending of this third appeal for help, but the implication from the order of his narrative is that the appeal was for help against fresh incursions of the old enemies. But the consequences of this implication are difficult to accept. The appeal was not answered, some of the Britons gave up the fight while others fought on and won a victory, a period of prosperity followed, fresh dangers began to threaten, and finally the Saxons were called in to help. Gildas gives no indication of the interval of time which elapsed between the sending of the appeal to Aetius and the calling in of the Saxons, but if all these separate events are considered without reference to other sources, it might not seem unreason-

[20] *Exc.* 25.
[21] C. E. Stevens, *op. cit.*, esp. 359-60.

able to suppose that they would have required a generation or more for their fulfilment. The appeal to Aetius cannot have been despatched earlier than 446, the first year of his third consulship, and if thirty years are added to this, Gildas seems to be saying that the Saxons did not come to Britain until after 475. The conclusion that there is some mistake in his narrative can only be avoided by virtually ignoring the item which seems to require the longest period of time, namely the phase of prosperity.[22] If Gildas had used figures to record the date of the third appeal to the Romans, a textual corruption might have been suspected, but he did not use figures, and therefore the date must be allowed to stand. Nor can it be denied that some serious trouble befell Britain in the third consulship of Aetius, because Gildas quotes from the letter which was sent to Aetius, and was therefore working ultimately from a written document. It is possible, however, to ask whether this great trouble was in fact the trouble which Gildas supposed it to be. William Skene, who seems to have been the first to pose this question, suggested that the trouble which was recorded in the document quoted by Gildas was not due to fresh incursions from the north, but to the revolt of the Saxons.[23] This suggestion has again been advanced by Mr. C. E. Stevens[24] who has brought additional arguments to its support. The details of the British recovery are not recorded by Gildas, but its results are, so far as they concerned the enemies from the north. The Scots went home, and although Gildas says that they returned later, he does not refer to them again in his narrative. The Picts apparently withdrew to the north and confined their activities to periodical raids. The remaining part of the narrative—the period of prosperity, the renewal of trouble, the arrival of the Saxons

[22] The difficulty is more readily apparent in Bede's narrative, *HE* I, 13-15, where he has left himself with only the three years 446-449 for the whole sequence of events from the appeal to Aetius to the arrival of the English.

[23] W. F. Skene, *The Four Ancient Books of Wales*, I, 35-6.

[24] *op. cit.*, 362-3.

and their eventual revolt—contains no inconsistencies in itself.

The blunder which Gildas made about the building of the walls is not a matter which need cause us any concern. He could not hope, any more than other historians or antiquarians down to the nineteenth century, to solve correctly a problem which could only be solved by scientific excavations. The problem raised by the appeal to Aetius is more serious. Are we entitled to suppose that Gildas made a mistake in the interpretation of one of his sources? The brief extract which he quotes from the letter to Aetius might refer equally well to a fresh incursion of the Picts and Scots or to the revolt of the Saxons, or perhaps even to a combination of the two. The question does not seem to admit of a proven answer, but I am inclined none the less to follow Skene and Stevens on the ground that it is difficult to make sense out of the narrative of Gildas without making some modification of this kind. There is no evidence that Gildas knew the dates of Aetius' third consulship, and he made no attempt to give a date for the arrival of the Saxons. The chronological difficulty raised by his own narrative may therefore never have occurred to him in the way in which it must surely have occurred to Bede, who knew both the initial date of Aetius' third consulship[25] and an approximate date for the arrival of the Saxons.[26] When it is recalled that the letter to Aetius need not have been dispatched until 453, the year before his fourth consulship, it will be seen that there is no chronological difficulty in the way of supposing the letter to have referred to the Saxon revolt. If this supposition is allowed, the phase of prosperity will have to be placed before, not after, the appeal to Aetius, and there will remain four points which are fundamental to the narrative of Gildas so far as it concerns northern Britain—that the troubles caused by the Roman withdrawal were followed by a phase of British recovery

[25] *HE* I, 13.
[26] *HE* I, 15.

and prosperity, that attendant upon this recovery the Scots were driven out and the Picts were driven back and finally that the Saxons were called in to help in the north at a time of renewed danger after the period of prosperity.

The second stage in this inquiry must be to consider certain later authorities who made use of Gildas, in order to determine what alterations they made to his narrative. Bede used Orosius for his account of the rebellion of Magnus Maximus,[27] and after drawing upon the same source for certain other events of imperial history which affected Britain, he turned to Gildas, using his entire narrative in direct quotation, in paraphrase or in abbreviation. He omitted none of the essential points, but he did make a number of small additions, most of which consisted of details connected with the building of the walls, and some of which arose from his knowledge of a third wall, where Gildas knew of only two, and of another builder, namely Severus. He describes the wall built by Severus as being, not a stone wall as some supposed, but a rampart of turves.[28] In describing the stone wall which was built in answer to the second appeal to the Romans, he says that it was built in the place where Severus had previously made his rampart.[29] With the first and last of the three walls thus identified with the *vallum*[30] and the Hadrianic Wall respectively, the middle one of the three, that is the turf wall built after the first appeal to the Romans, had to be equated with the only other wall of whose existence Bede was aware, namely the Antonine Wall. Bede must surely have seen both the *vallum* and the Hadrianic Wall, and although he is less likely to have seen the Antonine Wall, he would know about it because, as he says, it began at its eastern end near the monastery of Abercorn.[31] He knew more

[27] *HE* I, 9.
[28] *HE* I, 5.
[29] *HE* I, 12.
[30] We can hardly suppose that Bede meant the Hadrianic Turf Wall. At the most he could not have known more of this than the surviving two mile loop in the Birdoswald-Appletree sector.
[31] *HE* I, 12.

about the construction of the various walls than Gildas did, but this was the kind of information which he could get by going to look for himself or getting someone else to do so for him. The differences between Bede and Gildas on the walls are therefore no more than differences of interpretation and, Severus excepted, there is nothing to suggest that Bede knew any more about the political circumstances which led to their construction than Gildas did.

Another point on which Bede differs from Gildas is in his interpretation of the word *transmarinae*, which Gildas used of the Picts and Scots and which Bede borrowed from him. We use this word, he writes,[32] not because the Picts and Scots live outside Britain, but because they are separated from that part of the country held by the Britons by two arms of the sea which cut deep into the island from east and west: On the western side lies *Urbs Alcluith*, and on the eastern side lies *Urbs Giudi*. Bede seems to have felt that it was inaccurate to use the term *transmarinae* of people who did not in fact live across the sea from the main island of Britain, and he was therefore at pains to explain that he used the word only in a limited sense. The reason for his uneasiness is simply that conditions had changed. In the times of which Gildas wrote, that is the early fifth century, *transmarina* was a fairly accurate description of one at least of the two peoples in question, namely the Scots, but it was much less applicable to the Scots of Bede's own time because some of them had by then been firmly established north of the Clyde for two centuries. Bede's gloss on *transmarina* is not so much an addition to Gildas's narrative as a modification designed to make it in keeping with the changed conditions of later times.

The unsuccessful appeal to Aetius and the disasters which followed, the recovery of the Britons and their demoralization, the plague and the invitation to the Saxons—all these are incorporated by Bede in an abbreviated form. The only important point on which Bede differs from Gildas

[32] *HE* I, 12.

in this part of the narrative is that he identifies the *superbus tyrannus* of Gildas with Vortigern.[33] In his description of what happened after the arrival of the Saxons in Britain, Bede seems to differ slightly from Gildas, but it is not easy to tell whether the difference is only one of style and language or whether it is due to the use of different sources. In response to the invitation from the Britons, Bede writes,[34] three shiploads of Saxons arrived, and at the king's orders they settled in the eastern part of the island, apparently for the purpose of fighting against its enemies, but actually with the intention of conquering it. So much comes from Gildas mainly in direct quotation, but Bede goes on to say that the Saxons engaged in battle against the enemies who had come from the north, and were victorious.[35] This is much more explicit than anything to be found in Gildas, who writes of the Saxons as having the apparent intention of fighting on behalf of the Britons, but not as having actually done so. Gildas does, however, imply that the Saxons had some success, because it was news of this success which encouraged more of their countrymen to follow them. Bede goes on to say that a larger band of armed men then came to Britain, that they too were given lands on which to settle and that an agreement was made whereby the Saxons should fight against Britain's enemies in return for wages to be paid them by the Britons.[36] This also is more explicit than the account given by Gildas which mentions the supplying of provisions for the newcomers, but does not explicitly mention the granting of lands. Bede may only have been rewriting the rather lurid passage in which Gildas had described these events, but his account does leave the impression that Gildas was not the only source from which it was drawn. After recounting the origin of the various races which came to

[33] *HE* I, 14.
[34] *HE* I, 15.
[35] *HE* I, 15—*inito ergo certamine cum hostibus, qui ab aquilone ad aciem venerant, victoriam sumsere Saxones.*
[36] *HE* I, 15.

Britain and of the kingdoms which they founded, Bede then describes the revolt of the Saxons, deriving the greater part of his description in direct quotation from Gildas, but adding one statement of fact which is not found in Gildas—namely that after the Saxons had fought successfully against the Picts, they suddenly formed an alliance with them and turned against the Britons.[37]

This statement is of the greatest interest, because if it was not derived from Gildas, it seems to supply independent evidence in support of one of the most striking points in the narrative of Gildas, namely that the Saxons were first called in to help in dealing with dangers threatening in the north. It might be argued that, in referring to an alliance between Picts and Saxons, Bede has been influenced by Constantius' *Life of Germanus* which describes Picts and Saxons as having fought on the same side against the Britons in the Hallelujah battle.[38] Although it is true that in the order of his narrative Bede placed his account of the Hallelujah battle, which he derived from Constantius, after his account of the revolt of the Saxons which he derived from Gildas, yet he knew and stated that the Hallelujah battle had been fought some years before what he regarded as the *aduentus Saxonum* proper. Bede derived the greater part of *HE* I, 12-16, from Gildas. He refers to the alliance between Picts and Saxons and their joint attack on the Britons in I, 15. In I, 16, he describes the British victory at *Mons Badonicus*, and he concludes the chapter with the words *sed haec postmodum*. He then abandons the chronological order of his narrative and inserts a digression on the rise of Pelagianism and an account of the measures taken to combat it which he derived almost entirely from Constantius. This digression which forms I, 17-21, carries him back to the first visit of Germanus (429), and includes an account of the Hallelujah battle. He opens

[37] *HE* I, 15—*tum subito inito ad tempus foedere cum Pictis, quos longius iam bellando pepulerant, in socios arma vertere incipiunt*.

[38] Constantius' account is used by Bede, *HE* I, 20.

I, 17, with the words *ante paucos sane aduentus eorum annos heresis Pelagiana per Agricolam inlata etc. Eorum* here refers to the Saxons, and there can be very little doubt that this qualifying phrase applies to the whole insertion which forms I, 17-21. In I, 22, Bede returns to Gildas for his material, and resumes the narrative from the point at which it had been interrupted in I, 16. Bede thus leaves no room for doubt of his awareness that the alliance between Picts and Saxons at the Hallelujah battle was on an occasion which befell some years before the *aduentus Saxonum*. I am therefore of the opinion that his reference to an alliance between the Saxons and the Picts on the occasion of the Saxon revolt is not derived from Constantius or influenced by him and that it may accordingly be used as independent evidence in support of the testimony of Gildas that the Saxons were first called in to deal with troubles in the north of Britain. My impression that Bede had some source of information other than Gildas about the earliest settlements of the Saxons in the north and about their initial victories over the Picts is thereby strengthened.

Bede made one other major addition to the narrative of Gildas, namely the insertion of a number of dates. He placed the building of the turf and stone walls which resulted from the first two appeals to the Romans after 407[39] and before 423.[40] Gildas had placed the appeal to Aetius simply during the latter's third consulship. Bede adds that Aetius was consul for the third time in the twenty-third year of the reign of Theodosius, which began in 423.[41] The British recovery, the repulse of the Picts and Scots and the phase of prosperity he placed between the appeal to Aetius and the arrival of the Saxons which he assigned to some unspecified year during the joint reign of Marcian and Valentinian whose beginning he placed in 449.[42] The result of placing the narrative of Gildas within such a frame-

[39] *HE* I, 11, 12.
[40] *HE* I, 13.
[41] *HE* I, 13.
[42] *HE* I, 15. Marcian was not recognized in the west until 452.

work was to give the whole story a chronological rigidity which was entirely lacking in the original and to raise in an acute form the difficulty of interpreting the letter to Aetius as an appeal for help against the Picts and Scots. We ought not, however, to allow our estimate of the value of Gildas's narrative to be unduly influenced by Bede's chronological framework. The whole structure of Bede's *History* rested upon a chronological foundation, and when he embodied extracts from such writers as Gildas and Constantius the result was bound to be a somewhat artificial union.

The *Historia Brittonum* differs very greatly from both Bede and Gildas in its account of events in Britain between the departure of the Romans and the arrival of the English. It refers briefly to the rebellion of Magnus Maximus, to the attacks of the Picts and Scots and to the British appeals for help.[43] It then relates side by side what are really two separate stories, one concerning Hengest's invasion of Kent and the other the relations of Vortigern with Germanus. The latter has no bearing on the history of northern Britain, and there is therefore no need to discuss it. The story of Hengest's invasion of Kent[44] is of importance in two respects, first because the prominence which it gives to the Kentish settlement tends to obscure the earlier evidence of Bede and Gildas—a point which will be considered more fully below—and second because a small section of it deals directly with the north. Hengest, it is said, suggested to Vortigern, after the latter had consented to give him Kent, that he should send home for his son Octha and his nephew Ebissa, that these two should be set to fight against the Scots, and that they should be rewarded with lands in the north near the wall called *Guaul*. Octha and Ebissa arrived with forty ships, circumnavigated the lands of the Picts, ravaged the Orkneys, and finally took possession of very

[43] Cc. 29, 30. The references are to Mommsen's edition, *MGH Auct. Antiquiss.*, XIII, 111-222.

[44] Discussed in detail by H. M. Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, 36-44.

many districts beyond the *mare Frenessicum* as far as the borders of the Picts.[45] Several paragraphs later the *Historia Brittonum* adds that after the death of Hengest, Octha left the north of Britain to settle in Kent, and from him the kings of Kent were descended.[46] At first sight this story seems to lend powerful support to the evidence of Bede and Gildas that Saxon mercenaries were employed in the north at an early date, but there are points about it which suggest that it should be used with caution. According to the *Historia Brittonum* Octha was the son and successor of Hengest and came to be regarded as the ancestor of the kings of Kent. On two points this is in direct conflict with Bede who writes—*erat autem idem Aedilberct filius Irminrici, cuius pater Octa, cuius pater Oeric cognomento Oisc, a quo reges Cantuariorum Oiscingas cognominare. Cuius pater Hengist*, etc.[47] Bede thus makes Octha the grandson, not the son of Hengest, and reckons the Kentish kings to have been descended from Oisc, not from Octha. Bede is supported by the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which, however, changes the name of Hengest's son to Aesc.[48] So far as I am aware the name Ebissa is not recorded elsewhere, a fact which suggests that, like so many other personal names in the *Historia Brittonum*, it is a corrupt form.[49] *Mare Frenessicum* (with variants *Fresicum, Frisicum*) is presumably to

[45] C. 38—*invitabo filium meum cum fratueli suo, bellatores enim viri sunt, ut dimicent contra Scottos, et da illis regiones, quae sunt in aquilone iuxta murum, qui vocatur Guaul. et jussit ut invitaret eos et invitavit: Octha et Ebissa cum quadraginta ciulis. at ipsi cum navigarent circa Pictos, vastaverunt Orcades insulas et venerunt et occupaverunt regiones plurimas ultra mare Frenessicum* (variants—*Fresicum, Frisicum*) *usque ad confinium Pictorum.*

[46] C. 56—*in illo tempore Saxones invalescebant in multitudine in Brittannia. mortuo autem Hengisto Octha filius eius transivit de sinistrali parte Britanniae ad regnum Cantorum et de ipso orti sunt reges Cantorum.*

[47] *HE* II, 5.

[48] Text A, *s.a.* 455, 457, 465, 473, 488.

[49] It is possible that *Ebissa* is a corruption arising from the two names *Eoppa* and *Oesa*, father and grandfather respectively of Ida of Bernicia. The relevant part of the Bernician genealogy in the additions to the *Historia Brittonum* runs . . . *genuit Aedibrith genuit Ossa genuit Eobba genuit Ida* (*c.* 57). The genealogies in the *Historia Brittonum* are closely related to those found in Cott. Vesp. B VI and CCCC 183 (see

be interpreted as the Frisian Sea. Jocelyn's *Life of Kentigern* refers to the Frisian Shore in a context which indicates that the shore of the Firth of Forth was meant.[50] The Durham group of MSS. of the *Historia Brittonum*, none of which is earlier than the late twelfth century, supply the gloss *qui* (quod) *inter nos Scottosque est* and thereby seem to agree with Jocelyn in identifying the Frisian Sea with the Firth of Forth.[51] But whether or not this identification is correct, the name *Mare Frenessicum* is not out of keeping with the age to which the expedition of Octha and Ebissa is referred by the *Historia Brittonum*. Procopius,[52] writing soon after the middle of the sixth century, names the *Frissones* as one of the three races inhabiting Britain, and there are linguistic grounds[53] which compel us to suppose that the Frisians played a substantial part in the settlement of Britain. For some centuries before the viking age much of the trade of north-western Europe seems to have been conducted by the Frisians.[54] Dorestad, their principal town, was known to the Ravenna geographer.[55] At one time the most prosperous part of Mainz is said to have belonged to them, and they are said to have been so numerous in Worms at a later date that they were charged with the duty of keeping part of the town wall in repair.[56] Bede

H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 41). Cott. Vesp. B VI, reads in the reverse order—*ida eopping eoppa oesing oesa aethelberhting*. With the names in this order the formation of *ebissa* from *eoppa oesing* would be no more difficult than many of the other corruptions in the *Historia Brittonum*. It is not without interest to note that in Geoffrey of Monmouth's richly embroidered account (Bk. VIII, ch. 18) of a Saxon expedition to the north, Octha's companion is called, not Ebissa, but Eosa. An early marginal gloss to the twelfth century Ushaw MS. of Geoffrey identifies *mons Damet* (*Damen* in other MSS.), the scene of one of their exploits, with Wingates, near Brinkburn (Northumberland), EHR, 58, 47-8.

[50] *Frisicum litus*—Jocelyn's *Life of Kentigern*, ch. viii, ed. A. P. Forbes, *Historians of Scotland*, vol. v, 176. The passage is discussed by Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, II, 183-5.

[51] Mommsen's C^2D^mGL. In MSS. of this place and date *Scottos* must refer to the Scots of Scotland, not to the *Scotti* of Ireland.

[52] *History of the Wars*, Loeb ed. VII, XX, 7.

[53] H. M. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 58-60.

[54] E. Wadstein, *Norden och Väst-Europa i gammal tid*, 33-53.

[55] Ed. Pinder and Parthey, 228.

[56] Wadstein, *op. cit.*, 40.

refers to a Frisian merchant in London,[57] and there was a Frisian colony in York in the time of Alcuin.[58] In these conditions a part of the waters off Britain may well have come to be known as the Frisian Sea in the period between the Anglo-Saxon and Viking invasions, just as another part of the coast had previously come to be known as the Saxon shore.

The story of Octha and Ebissa contains three indications of the locality of their alleged settlements. Hengest's original suggestion was that they should be given the districts next the wall called *Guaul*, but the settlements themselves are said to have been beyond the Frisian Sea and reaching as far as the borders of the Picts, without reference to any wall. We have seen that Jocelyn and Durham tradition of the twelfth century and later identified the Frisian Sea with the Firth of Forth. If this identification is right—and we cannot discount it entirely—there can hardly be any doubt that the author of the story believed the districts concerned to have lain on the north side of the Firth of Forth and not far from the eastern end of the Antonine Wall, but in that case the story would be self-contradictory because the settlements would not merely have reached as far as the borders of the Picts but would have been inside those borders. The southern side of the Firth of Forth would have seemed a much more likely area, but we should then have to assume that the author of the *Historia Brittonum* was writing somewhere north of the Forth.[59] It has been suggested that the Frisian Sea should be identified with the Solway,[60] but even if the circumnavigation of the Picts is to be interpreted as meaning that Octha and Ebissa sailed south along the west coast of Scotland, which is in itself doubtful, the attack on the Orkneys

[57] *HE* IV, 20 (22). See F. M. Stenton, *op. cit.*, 56, for some numismatic evidence of trade between London and the Frisian coast.

[58] *Altfridi Vita Sancti Liudgeri*, c. 11, *MGH* SS II, 407.

[59] As F. Lot unconvincingly does, *Nennius et l'Historia Brittonum*, 65.

[60] O. G. S. Crawford, *Antiquity*, IX, 284.

is placed after this voyage and before the settlements which suggests that Octha and Ebissa made their way back to the North Sea before finally settling down.[61] If it is accepted that the settlements lay in the east rather than in the west, the Humber seems to be the only remaining possibility.[62] But are we bound to suppose that *ultra* refers to the standpoint of the author? Might it not be interpreted as referring to the standpoint of Octha and Ebissa, meaning only that Octha and Ebissa crossed the sea and settled beyond it? If this interpretation were allowed, the Frisian Sea would be no more than a name for the North Sea in general and the settlements would then lie somewhere towards the north of eastern Britain. Taken as a whole the story of Octha and Ebissa does not inspire confidence. It seems to be wrong about the ancestry of Octha, the name Ebissa looks like a corruption and the Frisian Sea cannot be certainly identified. But even if the story cannot be accepted in its details, it may none the less preserve a muddled tradition, independent of Bede and Gildas, that a Germanic settlement took place in the north-east of England or the south-east of Scotland at about the same time as the invasion of Kent, i.e. *c.* 449.

We have discussed the story of Octha and Ebissa at considerable length because it has a direct bearing on the beginnings of Northumbrian history. It is therefore the more necessary to remind ourselves that the position occupied by this story in the *Historia Brittonum*, so far from being a prominent one, is altogether subordinate to the matter relating to Hengest's invasion of Kent and to the dealings of Germanus with Vortigern. The space devoted to the invasion of Kent is seven or eight times as great as that devoted to Octha and Ebissa. In order to appreciate the consequences of this fact, we must now make a brief review of this discussion of the Gildas tradition. Gildas himself wrote

[61] As J. N. L. Myres points out, *History*, NS; 20, 262, n. 1.

[62] So Myres, *op. cit.*, 262, though I think he goes too far in describing the identification of the Frisian Sea with the Humber estuary as "virtually certain."

an account which was all but timeless, and which leaves a clear impression upon its readers that the outstanding achievement in Britain after the withdrawal of the Roman armies was the expulsion of the Picts and Scots and the establishment of British authority over a wide area of northern Britain. Gildas was, of course, in a position to look back and so to realize what a disastrous mistake from his point of view the introduction of the Saxons into Britain had been. Bede followed Gildas in his main outlines, and besides giving a clear impression of having known more about the Saxons in the north than Gildas did, he added a statement of fact about a treaty between the Saxons and the Picts at the time of the Saxon revolt which was certainly not derived from Gildas. At the same time he confined the story within a rigid chronological framework and made Vortigern responsible for the invitation to the Saxons. The *Historia Brittonum* made only the briefest of references to the Gildas tradition, and in its place added a long and detailed story about the invasion of Kent which contained a short digression on the adventures of Octha and Ebissa in the north. In this way the *Historia Brittonum* exaggerated the importance of what was, from the strictly contemporary point of view, merely a local affair and thereby seriously distorted the picture drawn by Gildas. Chance has preserved a detailed tradition about what was happening in Kent, but it is no more than chance which has failed to preserve similar traditions about what was happening in other parts of the country. This process of distortion was carried a stage further by the Parker text of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* which omitted all reference to events in the north of Britain and confined itself to brief entries relating to the progress of the invasions in the south. It is natural enough that events which are well to the fore in the scene depicted by Gildas the Briton should recede with the passage of time and finally disappear altogether from the works of English writers, but the change is one of emphasis alone and must not be allowed to impugn the

veracity of Gildas. Even at the risk of seeming to labour the point, it must be urged that the danger of gaining a distorted impression of these times is one that must be kept constantly in mind. The sum of all the available literary evidence for this period of cataclysmic change is small in the extreme, and even if it tells a part of the truth, it certainly does not tell more than a small fraction of the whole. To dismiss the story of the Kentish war as romance or to transplant Hengest to some other part of the country[63] is to forget that the fame of Hengest is accidental, to forget that the independent Ravenna geographer calls the leader of the Saxons not Hengest but Ansehis and to forget also that one more tradition might have given us yet a third name.

2. *The Veracity of Gildas.*

We have so far considered the accounts of those early writers who set out to compose a narrative which would cover the whole period from the last days of Roman Britain to the beginnings of English Northumbria. We are now in a position to discuss evidence which is independent of the Gildas tradition and which may be expected in part to serve as a check upon the veracity of Gildas and in part to throw light upon some of the episodes at which the Gildas tradition seems to hint. In order to find firm ground as a starting-point we must go back to the great disaster which overwhelmed Roman Britain in 367. Ammianus[64] names three peoples as playing an important part in the events of this year—the Picts, who are said to have been divided into two tribes called the *Dicalydonae* and the *Verturiones*, the Scots and the *Attacotti*. The Picts and Scots began to operate jointly against the defences of Roman Britain in the first half of the fourth century, and from then until the

[63] As would E. G. M. Fletcher, *Antiquity*, XVII, 91-3.
[64] XXVII, 8. Conveniently cited by R. W. Moore, *The Romans in Britain*, 94.

withdrawal of the Roman armies the military history of the province is very largely the record of their attacks and of the measures taken against them by successive Roman commanders. The events of 367, the fourth century rebuilding of the fort at Carnarvon and the construction of signal stations along the north-east coast—to note only a few details—are plain evidence that the Picts and Scots, either by themselves or with the help of allies, were not only able to carry a strong frontier by direct assault, but could also penetrate a very long way to its rear. It is difficult to believe that they could have achieved such things without being in control, and perhaps even in occupation, of a part of the country on the north side of the Tyne-Solway line. The third of these peoples, the *Attacotti*, are obscure. Ammianus describes them as a warlike people, and according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*[65] some of them served in the Roman armies in various parts of the western empire. There is no reference to any British tribes having taken part in the attack on the Wall from the north, unless the Attacotti were themselves of British origin. The political boundaries of these parts cannot again be drawn with any approach to certainty before the second half of the seventh century, and the situation which they then disclose is fundamentally changed. Abercorn was in English hands and Dumbarton was the capital of the British kingdom of Strathclyde. With the possible exception of a small area near the eastern end of the Antonine Wall, there is no good evidence for the presence of either Picts or Scots south of the Forth-Clyde line, the Attacotti have disappeared, and virtually the whole area between the two Walls is found to be divided between British and English peoples.

There are two ways in which it might be held possible to account for this revolutionary change in the political geography of northern Britain. The first which raises the very difficult question of the identity of the peoples living between the two Walls in the fourth century, is to suppose

[65] Cited by R. W. Moore, *op. cit.*, 194.

that Ammianus was mistaken in implying that the Britons took no major part in the operations of 367, and that many of those whom he calls Picts were in fact Britons. But even if this was the case (and we may note in passing that Bede was never in any doubt about the separate identities of the Britons and the Picts), it would not account entirely for the virtual disappearance of the Picts and Scots from the area south of the Antonine Wall or for the complete superiority which the Britons were able to establish in this area before the expansion of Northumbria towards the end of the sixth century. The second way, which does not necessarily exclude the first, is to suppose that at some period between 367 and *c.* 550 there was a phase of vigorous warfare which placed the Britons in complete control of the whole of Scotland as far north as the Forth-Clyde line. It cannot be supposed for one moment that the expulsion of the Picts and Scots was the work of the Northumbrian invaders of the sixth century. Northumbria was formed out of territory won by the English from the Britons, not from the Picts and Scots. If the English are excluded, there remain only the Roman army and the Britons, and therefore, even if the literary sources had contained no hint of any such northern success, we should have been compelled to postulate something of the kind in order to account for the facts as we find them in 367 and again some two centuries later. The testimony of Gildas on the fact of recovery, at least in the north, is therefore not to be doubted, but we may, indeed must, ask whether, in placing the recovery after the withdrawal of the Romans, he has placed it at the right time. The British domination of southern Scotland at the time of the foundation of Bernicia in 547 is not in dispute. The problem which concerns us now is how and when that domination was achieved. What sequence of events enabled the British so to recover from the disasters of 367 that they could not only overcome their old enemies, but could also offer a prolonged and vigorous opposition to the English invaders some two centuries later? In his description of the

island of Britain Bede thought fit to refer to *Alcluith*, i.e. Dumbarton, which he describes as *ciuitas Brittonum munitissima usque hodie*.[66] What were the circumstances which justified a reference to Dumbarton in such a way as to imply that it was one of the most powerful strongholds of Britain long before Bede's time, and what circumstances justified a not dissimilar reference to *urbs Giudi*, at the eastern end of the Antonine Wall?[67] There is not at present enough evidence to give complete answers to all these questions, but there is at least enough to justify an attempt to give partial answers.

Gildas leaves no room for doubt that the British civilization about which he wrote was Christian, and that is why it has left so few material remains. The amount of archæological evidence which can at present be brought to bear on these problems consists only of a small group of tombstones which seem, on considerations of style and language, to belong to this period. The entire group consists only of eleven stones of which five are connected with ecclesiastical establishments at Whithorn and Kirkmadrine.[68] Of the remaining six stones, one, from Manor Water and now in the Peebles museum, seems to mark the grave of an Irishwoman,[69] and another, which comes from Overkirkhope in Ettrick, is of little value for present purposes.[70] The remaining four, which come respectively from Northumberland, Liddesdale, Selkirk and Midlothian, are apparently the tombstones of civilians. The Northumberland stone, which was found near the Roman fort at Chesterholm, was erected to the memory of Brigomaglos.[71] Since the stone was not in its original position when it was first noticed, it is not known whether it marked an isolated grave or whether it formed part of a cemetery. The same is true

[66] *HE* I, 1. [67] *HE* I, 12.

[68] For the latest account of these five stones see R. A. S. Macalister, *Corpus Inscriptionum Celticarum Insularum*, I, 493-501.

[69] *Ibid.*, 486-8.

[70] J. Romilly Allen, *The Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, pt. 3, 432, fig. 451.

[71] Macalister, *op. cit.*, 475-6.

of the Liddesdale stone to the memory of Carantus the son of Cupitianus, which was found in the bed of Liddel Water.[72] The Midlothian stone, commonly known as the Cat Stane, stands in the parish of Kirkliston, close to the south bank of the Almond and between six and seven miles from Edinburgh.[73] The inscription it bears records that it marks the burial place of Vetta, the son of Victus or Victrix. Edward Lhwyd, describing this monument in about 1700, said that it covered an area of some seven yards in diameter, that it was raised somewhat above the level of the surrounding ground and was encompassed by large stones laid lengthwise. When the area was excavated in 1865 it was found that the monument formed part of a cemetery which was enclosed by a roughly built stone wall, within whose limits no less than fifty stone-lined graves were found. All the graves lay with heads to the west, and no relics of any kind were found with the burials. There can hardly be any doubt that this was a Christian cemetery of the British heroic age, although in the absence of relics it cannot be more precisely dated. The last and most interesting stone of the series comes from the parish of Yarrow in the county of Selkirk.[74] A recent study of this stone by Professor Macalister has shown that the long and in parts obscure inscription which it bears was carved in two stages, and that it represents the epitaphs of two princes who are described as the sons of *Liberalis*. The names of these two princes are read by Professor Macalister as *Nudogenos* and *Dubnogenos*. It was formerly thought that the name *Nodus* or *Nudus* was to be read as the father of the people commemorated in this inscription, and since *liberalis* is the Latin equivalent of the Welsh *hael* it was suggested that this person might be identified with Nudd Hael,[75] a member

[72] *Ibid.*, 491.

[73] *Ibid.*, 486, and the references there cited. See also *Antiquity*, XIX, 208, where O. G. S. Crawford disputes Macalister's reading.

[74] Macalister, *op. cit.*, 491-3.

[75] H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *The Growth of Literature*, I, 143, and the references there cited.

of the Strathclyde family, who is presumed to have lived in the latter part of the sixth century, but if Professor Macalister's reading is followed, this identification must be abandoned. The epithet *hael* was used as a kind of surname by more than one member of the Strathclyde family, but neither *Nudogenos* nor *Dubnogenos* occurs in any of the surviving Welsh genealogies which relate to families located in northern Britain. Excavation in the neighbourhood of this stone at about the middle of the nineteenth century suggests that it marked the site of another British Christian cemetery.[76] None of the persons named in this small group of inscriptions has yet been identified, and therefore their evidence, though valuable in other respects, is of no help chronologically.

One of the characteristics of this age, remarked Gildas, was fertility in tyrants (by whom he doubtless meant those who followed the example of Magnus Maximus and rebelled against the lawful authority, namely Rome). But the final withdrawal of the means whereby that authority was asserted, would leave the way open for anyone who was strong enough to assert his own authority in its place. The Welsh genealogies, reflecting the process by which the new political system emerged, record the names of a considerable number of kings who were believed to have ruled at various times in the fifth and following centuries. These genealogies can be checked at a sufficient number of points to suggest that they are reliable at least as far back as the beginning of the sixth century,[77] but although they contain names in abundance, it is not easy to attach many of them to particular geographical areas. A glance at the genealogies of that group of kings who were known collectively as the *Men of the North* will show that all of the thirteen separate genealogies go back to one of two

[76] PSAS II, 484-9. There are other cemeteries which may belong to this period, but direct evidence of their date is lacking, see *Arch. Ael.*, 4 S., XXIII, map facing p. 94.

[77] H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, I, 151-2.

ancestors, Ceredig Gwledig or Coel Hen.[78] It is certain that the descendants of Ceredig Gwledig were the rulers of the kingdom of Strathclyde and that they had their capital on the rock of Dumbarton near the western end of the Antonine Wall. In the time of Columba the representative of this line was Rodercus, son of Tothail,[79] otherwise known as Rhydderch Hael, who appears in the genealogies in the fifth generation from Ceredig.[80] If Rhydderch was reigning in the second half of the sixth century, it follows that Ceredig will have been reigning in the first half of the fifth century. Patrick's famous *Letter* was addressed to a certain Coroticus who, on the evidence of Muirchu's *Life of St. Patrick*, can be located at Dumbarton.[81] From the fact that Coroticus and Ceredig flourished at the same time, and from the further fact that a descendant of Ceredig's was undoubtedly ruling at Dumbarton in the sixth century, it has been inferred that Ceredig and Coroticus were one and the same person. If this inference is correct, it follows that Ceredig's family was already established at Dumbarton by *c.* 450, and we must therefore look more closely at Patrick's letter in order to see what kind of a kingdom he ruled over.

The occasion of the letter—which was not addressed to Coroticus himself, but to his soldiers—was a marauding expedition which these soldiers had undertaken to Ireland, and in the course of which they had killed or captured a number of Christians who had recently been baptized by Patrick himself.[82] Patrick does not address the soldiers explicitly as Christians, but he leaves no room for doubt that they came from what was nominally a Christian country, because it was the very fact that the raid had been

[78] See the table compiled by Skene, *Four Ancient Books*, I, 168-9.

[79] Adamnan's *Life of Columba*, ed. W. Reeves, bk. I, ch. viii, pp. 123-4.

[80] *Y Cymmrodor*, IX, 172-3, also A. W. Wade-Evans, *Nennius's History of the Britons*, 104-5.

[81] In the heading to Muirchu's *Life of St. Patrick*, Coroticus is called *Coirthech regem Aloo*. For Patrick's *Letter* see N. J. D. White, *Libri Sancti Patricii*, P.R.I.A., XXV, section c, 201-326, 542-52. The references are to this edition.

[82] §§ 2, 3.

made by men who were supposed to be Christians which made his position among the heathen and newly baptized in Ireland so difficult. He knew that the fate of the captives was to be sold on foreign slave markets. He denounced the soldiers as men with whom no Christian should take food or drink, and as men from whom none should accept alms, and he urged that the letter should be read as widely as possible, even in the presence of Coroticus himself. A letter of this kind presupposes the existence of an organized Christian community which would receive it and make its contents known, for Patrick particularly asked that it should be read *coram cunctis plebibus*,[83] and how did he expect this to be done unless by preachers? For what purposes would alms be given by soldiers unless for the maintenance of the church? The abrupt way in which Patrick turns from rebuking the soldiers to quote the example of the Christian Gauls whose custom it was to redeem Christians who had been sold into slavery,[84] leads one to infer that expeditions for the purpose of taking prisoners who could then be sold in foreign markets were of common occurrence in Patrick's time. The activities of Coroticus as a slave trader suggest one source of income which would enable him to support an army. The existence of that army calls to mind the curious remark of Gildas that the Romans left behind them patterns for the making of weapons before their final departure. As a literal statement of fact it is interesting, but one would hardly have expected a simple action of this kind to have passed into current tradition unless something more important lay behind it, for example instruction, not so much in the processes of manufacture, as in the uses of the weapons themselves. The inescapable fact remains that the Britons, with or without Roman help, were able to gain a notable success over two of the most formidable enemies that Roman Britain had ever faced, an achievement which implies either the formation of British

[83] § 21.
[84] § 14.

military organizations under skilled leadership or the weakening of the Picts and Scots by internal troubles. However that may be, it is clear from Patrick's *Letter* that the kingdom over which Ceredig ruled was far from being newly established at the time when that *Letter* was written, i.e. *c.* 450, and that the undertaking which led to its formation had been carried through at some appreciably earlier date.

This line of argument has led us to infer that at least on the western side of northern Britain some kind of political stability had been achieved by *c.* 425, and that the British frontier towards the north then rested on the line of the old Antonine Wall. If this was the case we can the more readily understand the success which attended the missionary and educational activities of Ninian's foundation at Whithorn. It is scarcely to be believed that such work could have been carried out if the conditions of 367 had still been prevalent in the earlier part of the fifth century. Is there any evidence to suggest that the period of the British recovery should be carried still further back, that is into the fourth century? Professor Chadwick drew my attention to a point of considerable interest in the genealogy of Ceredig. The name of Ceredig's father was Cynloyp, which is obscure, but his grandfather and great-grandfather were called respectively Cinhil and Cluim,[85] which are evidently the purely Roman names Quintilius and Clemens. If Ceredig flourished *c.* 450, his great-grandfather will have flourished *c.* 360, and we are immediately led to wonder under what circumstances a powerful native dynasty established at the western end of the Antonine Wall came to claim descent from apparently Romano-British ancestry. At this point we may leave the problem of Dumbarton for a moment in order to consider the situation at the other end of the Antonine Wall.

The counterpart of Dumbarton in the east was *urbs Giudi*. Referring to the two firths, Bede writes—*orientalis*

[85] *Y Cymm.*, IX, 173, also Wade-Evans, *op. cit.*, 104-5.

habet in medio sui urbem Giudi, occidentalis supra se, hoc est ad dexteram sui, habet urbem Alcluith, quod lingua eorum signficat petram Cluith.[86] Bede has commonly been interpreted as meaning that *urbs Giudi* lay on an island in the Firth of Forth, and the place has therefore been identified with Inchkeith, but, whatever *urbs* may mean in this context, it is scarcely conceivable that a site for such a "city" would have been chosen on an island which lay some four miles offshore in the middle of a tidal estuary. We know of only one use to which the islands off Britain were regularly put during this period, and that was to serve as ecclesiastical sanctuaries. If it has to be supposed that *urbs Giudi* was an island stronghold, Cramond Island would have been a more suitable site. I am not, however, convinced that this is the right interpretation of Bede. It seems more likely that in the passage quoted above Bede was contrasting the position of Alcluith which lay at the head of the Firth of Clyde, with the position of Giudi which lay, not out in the middle of the Forth, but half way along it. If this is the correct interpretation, the site of *urbs Giudi* should be sought in some suitable position, such as Cramond itself or perhaps Inveresk, on the southern shore of the Forth. So far as I know there is no direct evidence for associating *urbs Giudi* with the kingdom of Manau over which Cunedda ruled. This latter, however, seems to have been the counterpart at the eastern end of the Antonine Wall of Ceredig's kingdom at the western end. Cunedda himself and a large part of the Votadini over whom he ruled migrated to north-west Wales, where he founded the kingdom of Gwynedd, whose ruler in the time of Gildas was Maelgwn. There will be more to say later about the date and purpose of this migration, but for the moment we are concerned with trying to establish the date at which the kingdom of Manau first came into being.

According to the Harleian genealogies Cunedda's father

[86] *HE* I, 12.

was called *Aetern*, his grandfather *Patern Pesrut* and his great-grandfather *Tacit*.[87] It has long been recognized that these are Roman names and that the epithet *Pesrut* seems to imply that the man to whom it was given was invested with some kind of Roman authority. The suggestion has been made that the phase of stability which is implied by the establishment of this eastern kingdom and its western counterpart should be equated with the political settlement of Constans in 343,[88] but it is difficult to see how the two kingdoms could have survived intact the great upheaval of 367, unless indeed we are to suppose that the area south of the Antonine Wall was not greatly affected. Moreover, this equation depends on the assumption that Cunedda flourished *c.* 400. Here I must anticipate conclusions by saying that I suspect the generally accepted dating of Cunedda's migration to be erroneous, and that he and Ceredig were approximately contemporary, both flourishing about the middle of the fifth century.

The genealogies show that both Ceredig and Cunedda were believed to be descended from men who bore Roman names. In both cases the Roman nomenclature can be traced as far back as their great-grandfathers, but beyond that it disappears. If Ceredig and Cunedda flourished about the middle of the fifth century, a point which is not in dispute for Ceredig, their great-grandfathers will have flourished somewhat after the middle of the fourth century, that is to say in and after the great troubles of 367. This coincidence suggests a train of thought which has far-reaching consequences, and it will therefore be well to consider how far genealogical material which is not preserved in any manuscript earlier than the twelfth century can legitimately be used to interpret fourth-century history. Genealogies are a characteristic feature of the early literatures of many peoples, and the development of this form of historical record is particularly well-marked among the

[87] *Y Cymm.*, IX, 170, also Wade-Evans, *op. cit.*, 101.
[88] *Northumberland County History*, XV, 113-14.

Teutonic, Scandinavian and Celtic peoples.[89] It has long been established that the alliterative genealogy, preserved orally and sometimes in the form of verse,[90] was a means whereby accurate information could be handed down over a number of generations which might well cover a period of several centuries before the genealogies themselves were first committed to writing. A case in point is the genealogy of the Mercian royal family. This is not now preserved in any manuscript earlier than the ninth century, but there is good evidence for thinking that the names Offa and Wermund which represent the eighth and ninth generations before Penda, are those of historical persons who flourished on the other side of the North Sea in the second half of the fourth century.[91] In this case the genealogy was accurately preserved in spite of the migration overseas of the family concerned. An even longer span is covered by the genealogies of the high kings of Ireland which, in the opinion of Professor and Mrs. Chadwick, "are more or less trustworthy as far back as the third century, if not further."[92] On the other hand, it cannot be denied that at certain periods influences have been at work which tended to corrupt certain genealogies by the addition of spurious elements. A good example is provided again by the West-Saxon genealogy which was corrupted by the addition of both Germanic and Hebrew names with the twofold object of glorifying the family and lending a Christian colour to its descent.[93]

The most important collection of Welsh genealogies is contained in MS. Harleian 3859, which seems to have been written at about the beginning of the twelfth century, but there is good reason to think that the text of the genealogies, as also of the *Annales Cambriae* in the same manuscript,

[89] For a discussion of the subject see H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, I, 270-6, to which I am much indebted.

[90] As in the case of part of the West-Saxon genealogy in the preface to the Parker Chronicle.

[91] The evidence is discussed in detail by H. M. Chadwick, *The Origin of the English Nation*, 110-36.

[92] *op. cit.*, I, 273.

[93] R. W. Chambers, *Beowulf, An Introduction*, 72-4.

was written *c.* 955, and that even in this form it was not an original work, but was based upon earlier materials.[94] In the case of the Welsh there was less contact with primitive heathenism and therefore less motive for the introduction of spurious Christian elements, but the other principal motive for genealogical corruption still remained. Since it seems to have been thought that the best way of glorifying a British family was to provide it with a distinguished Roman ancestry, the genealogies of Ceredig and Cunedda might be regarded with suspicion on the very ground that they do contain Roman names. But I doubt if this suspicion would be justified without considering the kind of Roman names they contain. Genealogies which have been corrupted for the purpose of glorifying the family in question do not seem to be difficult to detect. Examples are provided by the families whose descent is traced from Maxim Guletic, i.e. Magnus Maximus, and in one instance through Magnus Maximus back to Helena and Constantine.[95] Another example is a case in which a long list of Roman emperors has been used as a genealogy.[96] The houses of Dumbarton and Manau (later Gwynedd) were among the most famous of all British dynasties. If pedigree makers had been at work, it would have been surprising to find them using such names as Quintilius, Clemens, Aeternus, Paternus and Tacitus when they had available the whole range of Roman emperors from Magnus Maximus back to Augustus himself. We have seen already that the Dumbarton pedigree can be checked by independent sources at points in the fifth and sixth centuries. Maelgwn, who was Cunedda's great-grandson, was given an unenviable prominence by Gildas, and the episode of Cunedda's migration which was so profoundly important for north-west Wales, was another

[94] H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, 149-50. The best edition is by E. Phillimore, *Y Cymm.*, IX, 141-83.

[95] Harl. Gen., no. II, *Y Cymm.*, IX, 171, also Wade-Evans, *op. cit.*, 103.

[96] Harl. Gen., no. XVI, *Y Cymm.*, IX, 175-7, also Wade-Evans, *op. cit.*, 107-8.

circumstance which makes it likely that the descent of this family would be accurately known. I would not suggest that a case can be proved on the unsupported testimony of the genealogies, but I believe that this testimony may be profitably used as a guide when none better is available.

Dr. I. A. Richmond[97] has elsewhere advanced the view that the kingdoms of Strathclyde and Manau may have been Roman foundations representing a deliberate policy of creating buffer states which would serve as zones of influence beyond the frontier proper. The genealogies seem to support this interpretation, but I feel doubtful whether he is right in associating them with the political settlement of Constans in 343. It is unfortunate that there seems to be no method of establishing the dates of Ceredig and Cunedda more precisely. For Ceredig's dates we are dependent on Patrick's *Letter* which was written between 432 and 461, with a check supplied by reckoning backwards from the dates of his successors. The evidence for Cunedda's dates comes from two conflicting sources, one of them being a statement in the *Historia Brittonum* concerning the time of his migration to Wales, and the other being the fact that he was the great-grandfather of Maelgwn whose death is recorded in 548.[98] It would be foolish to maintain that by reckoning backwards at thirty years to a generation from a starting-point which is itself so insecurely established, we can determine accurately the period when the great-grandfathers of these two men lived. There cannot even be any very real confidence that such a calculation would be accurate enough to distinguish between the time of Constans and the time of Theodosius. None the less, unsatisfactory though the evidence is, it seems to point rather to the

[97] *loc. cit.*, n. 88 above.

[98] The passage from the *Hist. Britt.* is discussed further below, p. 34. In the *Ann. Camb.*, where the death of Maelgwn is recorded, dating by the Christian era is not used. The passage of years is marked simply by an abbreviation for *annus*. In correlating these years with the years of the incarnation the editor in the Rolls edition and Phillimore in *Y Cymm.* ed. seem to be one year too early. Cf. the dates adopted by H. M. and N. K. Chadwick, *op. cit.*, I, 148-9.

Theodosian period, partly on chronological grounds and partly because of the difficulty of understanding how the Picts and Scots could have overrun the Hadrianic frontier, as well as most of the province to its rear, without also destroying the states of Manau and Strathclyde, the very purpose of whose establishment was presumably to prevent just such an invasion. The invasion of 367 was the last major undertaking in which the Picts and Scots operated jointly against the British, and so far as we can see the British thereafter remained securely in possession of the whole country between the two Walls until it was conquered from them by the Northumbrians some two and a half centuries later. If we are right in assigning the foundation of Strathclyde and Manau to Theodosius, it would seem that the method adopted to overcome the menace of the Picts and Scots was to carry the war boldly into the enemies' territory and to secure the country thus regained, not by occupying a continuous frontier as in the days of Antoninus Pius, but by setting up two states under Roman direction at each end of the old frontier. To judge from later history this move was completely successful. Was it the introduction to that period which Gildas describes as bringing with it an age so prosperous that none who came after could remember such wealth? And what of the words used by Ammianus about the restoration achieved by Theodosius ... *...recuperatamque provinciam, quae in dicionem concesserat hostium, ita reddiderat statui pristino, ut eodem referente et rectorem haberet legitimum, et Valentia deinde vocaretur arbitrio principis, velut ovantis?*[99] Could there have been any better ground for the celebration of a triumph than the defeat of these old enemies of Roman Britain? It would perhaps be unwise to question the emphatic verdict of such an eminent scholar as R. G. Collingwood,[100] but it is

[99] XXVIII, 3.

[100] R. G. Collingwood and J. N. L. Myres, *Roman Britain and the English Settlements*, 286.

scarcely possible to avoid remarking how strangely apposite are the words of Ammianus to the situation we have been discussing.

Until fresh evidence can be brought to bear, the Roman origin of Strathclyde and Manau must remain largely conjectural. What is certain, however, is that before the middle of the fifth century the two states had turned into powerful British kingdoms. They had, if the expression may be allowed, "gone native." Despite the encroachments of Northumbria and the capture, once by the English[101] and once by the Vikings,[102] of Dumbarton itself, the kingdom of Strathclyde remained one of the most important factors in the politics of northern Britain for another five hundred years. The history of Manau, at least under that name, was shorter, owing to a circumstance to which we have already referred, namely the migration of Cunedda, accompanied as it would seem by many of his people, to north-west Wales. There are two sources of evidence which may be used to determine the date of this migration. The first is a famous passage in the *Historia Brittonum*,[103] which explains how Maelgwn came to rule in Gwynedd by saying that it was because his great-grandfather (*atavus*) Cunedda had come there from the district of Manau Guotodin with eight of his sons 146 years before Maelgwn's reign and had expelled the Scots after inflicting a severe defeat on them. According to the *Annales Cambriae* Maelgwn died in 548. The date of his accession is not known, but since Gildas recognized his pre-eminent position among contemporary British rulers, we may not be far wrong in placing it *c.* 530, and this will place Cunedda's migration *c.* 384. By supposing either that the period of 146 years was meant to be calculated, not from the beginning, but from the end of Maelgwn's reign, a construction which the passage will not readily bear, or that Maelgwn's reign did not begin till *c.* 540, which would make it much shorter than

[101] In 756, Symeon of Durham, Rolls ed., II, 40.
[102] In 870, *Annals of Ulster*, *s.a.* 869.
[103] C. 62.

the words of Gildas seem to suggest, the migration can be made to fall into place as one of the measures taken by Stilicho between 395 and 399 to strengthen a severely threatened frontier district.

The other source of evidence is the fact which is well-established in the genealogies, that Cunedda was Maelgwn's great-grandfather. If, for the sake of achieving round figures, we assume that Maelgwn was fifty-eight when he died, his birth will fall in 490 and the birth of his great-grandfather *c.* 400. Allow an additional ten years to Maelgwn and Cunedda's birth will fall *c.* 390. Thus the genealogies point to 390 or a little later for the date of Cunedda's birth. The *Historia Brittonum* points to 390 or a little earlier for the date of his migration. There is therefore a sharp conflict of evidence and the gap is too wide to be spanned by any normal allowance for error which the system of reckoning by thirty years to a generation requires to be made. The conflict becomes all the sharper when we recall that Cunedda was accompanied by eight of his nine sons and is therefore unlikely to have been a man of less than fifty at the time.

We have therefore to decide whether the genealogy or the figure given by the *Historia Brittonum* is likely to provide the more reliable evidence. It is a commonplace that figures very easily become corrupt in the copying of MSS. On the other hand, it is not unknown for a generation to drop out of a genealogy in the same process. To suppose that this has happened at some point between Cunedda and Maelgwn would be a convenient method of reconciling the conflict of evidence—convenient, but in this case inadmissible. In these four generations from Cunedda to Maelgwn we are not dealing with men who are mere names, men known only from the genealogy in which they occur. We know the names not only of the eight sons who went with Cunedda, several of which were long preserved in the names of the places over which they ruled,[104] but also of the other

[104] Sir John Lloyd, *op. cit.*, I, 117-18.

son, Typiaun, who was the first-born and who remained behind in Manau Guotodin, where he died.[105] One of these eight sons, Enniaun Girt, was the father of Cadwallon the Longhanded, celebrated in the Triads as leader of one of the Three Fettered Warbands of the Isle of Britain.[106] Cadwallon the Longhanded was father of Maelgwn. The four generations are therefore covered with each supported by other evidence in such a way as to make the possibility of a lost generation extremely remote.

There is, however, another argument to be taken into account. The Romans were still in control of North Wales in 380,[107] and the date supplied by the *Historia Brittonum* asks us to believe that within four or five years the Scots had invaded North Wales and become a sufficiently formidable threat to the security of the country to require the organization of a major campaign to evict them. This is scarcely credible. It seems unlikely that the settlements would even begin until some years after the area affected had passed out of Roman control, presumably by the withdrawal of the garrisons in 383. Welsh tradition which preserved a clear memory of the "Irishmen's huts,"[108] and which, moreover, ascribed the final expulsion of the Scots not to Cunedda himself, not even to his sons, but to his grandson, Cadwallon the Longhanded,[109] is evidence that the Scottish occupation was not something which lasted only half a dozen years. On these various grounds we can scarcely escape the conclusion that the figure given by the *Historia Brittonum*, 146 years before the reign of Maelgwn, is corrupt, that Cunedda belongs to the first half of the fifth century, and that the migration of the Votadini took place towards the middle of that century.

The migration of the Votadini seems to have been completely successful in its object of expelling the Scots from

[105] *Y Cymm.*, IX, 182, also Wade-Evans, *op. cit.*, 113-14.
[106] Lloyd, *op. cit.*, I, 120.
[107] *Y Cymm.*, XXXIII, 89-93.
[108] Lloyd, *op. cit.*, I, 111-12.
[109] *Ibid.*, 120.

north-west Wales, but the price which would have to be paid for such success would be to upset the equilibrium established in the north by the Theodosian settlement. We have no means now of estimating the relative strength of the Pictish threat from across the Forth and the Scottish threat in northern Wales, and we can only suppose that the danger of a deep penetration into British territory from the west seemed real enough to justify a move which must have led to a considerable weakening of the northern defences. To have left the eastern end of the old Antonine line completely undefended would have been to invite disaster, and that, no doubt, was why Typiaun, Cunedda's eldest son, was left behind in Manau. The fact that it was Cunedda's eldest son who remained in Manau suggests with some force that Cunedda was aware of the dangers inherent in the move to Wales, and that he thought it necessary to make provision against them. Gildas, it will be recalled, states that after the period of prosperity the threat of invasion was renewed, and that in order to meet this threat the Saxons were called in. Gildas implies, and Bede explicitly states, that the Saxons were at first successful and that the Picts were driven back to the north. Now the arrival of the Saxons and the migration of the Votadini seem to have coincided approximately in point of time, and we may perhaps conjecture that the two events were not unconnected with one another, in other words, that the renewed threat of invasion from the north was due to the weakening of the northern defences which resulted from the migration of the Votadini. The claim that Saxon *foederati* were established somewhere in the north before the middle of the fifth century, and that they fought successfully in the service of the British is a strong one, even when it takes into account only the literary evidence.

The archæological evidence is at present difficult to interpret. It has accumulated piecemeal during the last hundred years in the course of excavations which were conducted by people who were either not qualified to perform such work

or who had no proper understanding of the problems involved. Much of the material has been lost completely, and there is no published *corpus* of what has survived. In all too many instances, even where the material has survived, there are no detailed accounts of the circumstances in which it was found. In these very unsatisfactory conditions the evidence should perhaps be used rather as a guide in formulating the problems to which further study of the existing remains and the properly conducted excavation of fresh sites may be expected to provide the answers, than as something from which positive deductions can at present be made. The evidence in question is virtually confined to one or other of two areas, the Yorkshire Wolds and the immediate surroundings of York itself.[110] There seems to be general agreement among those who are best qualified to give an opinion that in both of these areas there is some material which cannot easily be dated later than the fifth century. For the Wolds it will suffice now to refer to cremation urns from Sancton[111] and Broughton by Mal-

[110] Relics of the pagan Saxon period have been discovered at several sites in other parts of Northumbria, but in the aggregate they are too slight to be of much positive value.

[111] The cremation cemetery lay on high ground about half a mile north-east of Sancton church. Eight urns, discovered shortly before 1875 and presented to the Ashmolean, are illustrated *Arch.*, XLV, pl. xxxiii, p. 409, reproduced in *Trans. E. Riding Ant. Soc.*, XVI, pl. III, opp. p. 50. A detailed account derived from M. Forster, quoted by W. Smith, *Old Yorkshire*, 1882, III, 12-13, refers to the discovery of a large number of urns, some whole, some fragmentary, and estimates the cemetery to have covered an area 150 yards by 50 yards. According to M. Forster this site was distinct from a mixed inhumation-cremation cemetery somewhat nearer the village. Two more cremation urns discovered in 1892 and 1894, are illustrated in *Trans. E. Riding Ant. Soc.*, V, 116-17, figs. 1 and 2. T. Shepherd, *ibid.*, XIV, 63, states that the cremations were laid in rows (as at Heworth, see further below). Another twenty urns, now in the Hull Museum, are described and illustrated by T. Shepherd, *ibid.*, XVI, 52-66, pls. IV-XIII. The distinction between the two separate cemeteries noted by M. Forster is also noted by Baldwin-Brown, *Arts in Early England*, IV, 803, but not by the Elgees, *Archæology of Yorkshire*, 179. *VCH*, York, II, 75-7, notes finds from three separate sites near Sancton. The situation is extremely confused, but it is clear that the finds from Sancton cover a long period, and that much of the material belongs to the sixth century. I am much indebted to my wife and to the late Miss M. Moulden for undertaking research into the earliest records relating to this and other pagan Saxon sites in east

ton[112] and to the dwelling site at Elmswell,[113] near Driffield, where the Roman and Anglo-Saxon periods of occupation have been found to merge into one another without any perceptible break. Whether there are any more sites on the Wolds which should be assigned to the fifth century is a matter which must await the proper publication of the whole body of material.

The York area has yielded cremation burials from two, or possibly three, sites within a mile of York Minster, that is to say within a mile from the centre of the legionary fortress. The most important of these is the cemetery at Heworth, which was discovered in the spring of 1878, during the work on the construction of the Foss Islands railway. The fact of its discovery was briefly recorded in contemporary publications.[114] It was not till 1891 that a few more details were published, and it was then stated that forty-two urns had been recovered, but that "a large number" had been destroyed before any notice of their discovery reached the Museum at York.[115] The contents of the urns are stated to have been burnt bones, a pair of bronze tweezers, some glass beads fused by heat, and some buttons. There is no reference to any other objects being found with the urns, which are said to have lain in rows about two feet apart. Some of the urns show marked similarities on the one hand to urns from continental cemeteries[116]

Yorkshire. Their work has shown that behind the apparent tidiness of the standard modern works there is a state of serious confusion. A gazetteer of Anglo-Saxon remains in E. Yorks. on the lines of M. Kitson Clark's gazetteer of the Roman period (*Roman Malton and District Report no. 5*), would be invaluable.

[112] Now in the York Museum, *Archæologia*, XXXVII, 472: Baldwin-Brown, *op. cit.*, IV, 391: *VCH*, York, II, 100. This site is of particular interest because of its proximity to the Roman fort at Malton.

[113] A. L. Congreve, *A Roman and Saxon Site at Elmswell, East Yorks.*, Hull Museum Publications Nos. 193, 198. Also P. Corder, *Excavations at Elmswell, East Yorks.*, H.M.P. No. 207.

[114] *Annual Report of the Council of the Yorkshire Phil. Soc. for 1878*, 8-9. The cemetery was found during the making of a cutting for the railway, *Yorkshire Gazette*, 20 April 1878.

[115] *York Museum Handbook*, 1891, 216.

[116] R. H. Hodgkin, *A History of the Anglo-Saxons*, 1935, I, pl. 29. opp. p. 159.

and on the other to urns from Little Wilbraham[117] in Cambridgeshire, which in its turn is said to have yielded some of the earliest types of ordinary Anglo-Saxon cremation pottery known in England.[118] Some years earlier, in November 1859, workmen engaged in preparing a site for some buildings on ground belonging to F. W. Calvert in the area known as The Mount, about one mile to the south-west of the Minster in the direction of the Roman road from York to Tadcaster, discovered an inscribed Roman sarcophagus lying about two feet below the surface.[119] At the same time and place an unspecified number of cinerary urns were found "of various, some of them unusual, forms," together with fragments of Samian and other pottery.[120] Contemporary reports refer to the urns and to the sarcophagus in such a way as to imply that both were believed to be Roman, but some years later six of the urns were presented to the York Museum by F. W. Calvert on whose land they had been found, and they had by then been recognized as Saxon.[121] Unfortunately the accounts of this discovery are not detailed enough to show the relation of the Saxon burial urns to the Roman material which was found at the same time. The Saxons had evidently used what we know to have been the site of a large Roman cemetery for their own burials, but there is no evidence to show whether the cemetery remained in continuous use or whether the two phases of its occupation were separated by a considerable interval of time. Other sources refer to the discovery also in 1859, of five Anglo-Saxon urns in a garden which is described as lying about half a mile outside Micklegate Bar. In a paper which was published nine years after this discovery, and which was not concerned with York at all, but with Frilford in Berk-

[117] A. Plettke, *Ursprung und Ausbreitung der Angeln und Sachsen*, Hanover, 1921, taf. 50, 51.

[118] Collingwood and Myres, *op. cit.*, 387.

[119] *Yorkshire Gazette*, 12 Nov. 1859.

[120] Report of a meeting of the *York. Phil. Soc.* printed in the *Yorkshire Gazette*, 10 Dec. 1859.

[121] *York Museum Handbook*, 1875, 134.

shire,' George Rolleston remarked of this find: "Several Roman urns and sarcophagi were found at the same time and place, the Anglo-Saxons having in this, as in so many other Roman stations, used the cemeteries of their predecessors."[122] This remark led Baldwin Brown to infer that the cemetery had been in continuous use from the Roman into the Anglo-Saxon periods.[123] Some recent writers[124] have regarded the site on The Mount as being quite distinct from the site half a mile outside Micklegate Bar. But both finds are said to have been made in 1859, the descriptions of the two discoveries are remarkably similar, and The Mount is in fact about half a mile outside Micklegate Bar. Research into the earliest accounts of these discoveries suggests rather strongly that the belief that there were two separate sites is a misapprehension due to the practice of different writers using different methods of describing the whereabouts of one and the same place.

It is a strange circumstance that within a mile from the centre of a Roman legionary fortress set on low-lying ground and virtually surrounded by wood or marsh, the very kind of place where we would not have expected to find evidence of early Anglo-Saxon settlement, there should be a large cemetery which bears some indications of being among the earliest Anglo-Saxon cemeteries, not only in the north, but also in the whole country. But York was something more than the site of a legionary fortress. It was also the site of a *colonia* as well as the headquarters of the *Dux Britanniarum*, at least as late as 395.[125] It was, in other words, the most important military centre in Roman Britain, and as such it had been used more than once as the main base for Roman campaigns towards the north. Here, if anywhere in Britain, we might have expected a knowledge of military affairs to have survived the withdrawal of the regular Roman forces. How then did it come about that

[122] *Arch.*, 42, pt 2, 433.
[123] Baldwin-Brown, *op. cit.*, IV, 802.
[124] E.g. F. and H. W. Elgee, *op. cit.*, 179.
[125] C. E. Stevens, *Arch. J.*, XCVII, 141.

York was apparently among the first places in Britain to fall into Anglo-Saxon hands? When we recall that the signal stations on the Yorkshire coast were in occupation about the years 370-395,[126] and that the defences of Malton were repaired about the same time,[127] we may well ask this question not merely of York, but of the East Riding as a whole. It is remarkable that the one area north of Humber which has yielded evidence of intensive Anglo-Saxon settlement during the pagan period should be that very area in which an organized Roman command is known to have survived longest.

If we believe that these settlements were solely the result of an invasion such as that which evidently took place along the rivers debouching into the Wash, we find ourselves faced with a situation which is entirely out of keeping with all the evidence that we have discussed so far. Kent was always exposed to invasion because of the short sea-crossing and East Anglia was hardly less so, but Yorkshire was the very core of the military zone of Roman Britain, and although fortifications would be of little value without properly trained men to defend them, we have seen enough to know that the British in the north made such a good recovery, despite the withdrawal of the Roman armies, that they were able to offer vigorous opposition to invasion from more than one quarter. They kept the Pictish menace under control. They expelled the Scots from northern Wales. They came very near to expelling the English from Bamborough. And even in the reign of Aethelfrith, as it would seem, they were still powerful enough to send an expedition against the English in Yorkshire from as far away as Edinburgh.[128] Yet in the midst of all these achievements they apparently lost control not only of the Wolds but also of York. We have only to accept the testimony of Gildas, Bede and the *Historia Brittonum* that the Saxons first came

[126] Collingwood and Myres, *op. cit.*, 285.
[127] P. Corder, *The Defences of the Roman Fort at Malton*, 68.
[128] See articles summarizing I. Williams' *Caneu Aneirin* by K. Jackson, *Antiquity*, XIII, 25-34, and C. A. Gresham, *Antiquity*, XVI, 237-57.

to the north on the invitation of the Britons, and fought for them against the Picts, and the whole situation immediately becomes intelligible. The cemeteries at Heworth, Sancton and Broughton by Malton, and possibly others, may then be taken to represent the remains, not of Anglo-Saxon invaders, but of Germanic auxiliaries who fought in the service of the Britons and who, as Bede says, were kept supplied with provisions as well as with land on which they could settle in return for their services. The Picts were not a new enemy, and anyone conducting a campaign against them might well be expected to use the base which had served the same purpose for centuries past. If York itself would serve as a military base, the rich corn-growing land on the Wolds would be no less valuable as a source of supply. It may well be that the story of Octha and Ebissa has preserved a confused reminiscence of these early settlements in Yorkshire. The Gildas tradition that the soldiers, becoming discontented with their pay and supplies, suddenly came to a secret agreement with the Picts and revolted against the British provides a most convincing explanation of how it came about that the East Riding fell into English hands so much sooner than any other territory north of the Humber. For reasons which have already been made plain,[129] the acceptance of this interpretation does not in the least necessitate the transfer of Hengest and his men from Kent to Yorkshire.

If the appeal for help which was sent to Aetius in his third consulship has been correctly interpreted, the revolt of the Saxons occurred some time in the years 446-450. It seems likely that they would then be present in the north in considerable numbers, partly because they would not otherwise have been in a position to carry out a successful revolt and partly because their revolt was due, according to Gildas, to the inability of the Britons to keep them supplied with provisions. The *Historia Brittonum* has preserved one scrap of information which may perhaps be connected

[129] Above, pp. 18-19.

with this revolt. The genealogy of the kings of Deira, which is found in the additions to this work, gives the name Soemil as representing the fifth generation in descent from Wodan, and of him it is stated *ipse primus separavit Deur o Birneich.*[130] Soemil in his turn stands five generations before Aelle, who probably died *c.* 600.[131] Soemil will therefore have been born *c.* 400, and will have been active at the time of the Saxon revolt. The dates synchronize. The statement itself is somewhat obscure, but the "separation" from one another of two states bearing British names by a man with a Teutonic name suggests a situation in which one of those states, i.e. Deur, passed under foreign control, a situation not out of keeping with the circumstances of the Saxon revolt. It must, however, be noted that this information about Soemil is not confirmed by any other source, and that the Deiran genealogy preserved in the *Historia Brittonum* is not in agreement with the genealogy found in other sources. The name Soemil is not found at all in the genealogy preserved in the entry for the year 560 (A) of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. It is found in MSS cccc 183, BM Vesp. B vi and the *Textus Roffensis*, but it stands seventh in descent from Wodan, instead of fifth as in the *Historia Brittonum*, and furthermore these three texts which are in agreement with one another, differ from the *Historia Brittonum* in the name they give to Soemil's successor. In these circumstances it would be wise to suspend judgement about Soemil's part in the Saxon revolt.

So far as we have been able to detect the main trends in the history of this British heroic age in the north, the evidence suggests with some force that the operations which led to the British recovery were conducted with skill and vigour. There are no less plain indications of some powerful and competent governing authority, probably south of Hadrian's Wall, in the first half of the fifth century. The

[130] C. 61.

[131] See below, p. 48.

removal of the greater part of an entire tribe from Lothian to north Wales can have been no easy task. It demands a state of affairs in which a single authority controlled the country across which Cunedda and his people had to pass, and it suggests a knowledge of Roman imperial ways of dealing with difficult frontier problems. This latter is also true of the invitation to the Saxons, for in essence the method adopted to deal with the Pictish threat in the north was the same as that adopted to deal with the Scottish threat in Wales. To call in the help of a foreign people was a dangerous, and in the event a disastrous, policy, but it was little more than a development, and one not confined to Britain, of the Roman practice of the fourth century in the course of which an increasingly large part of the Roman armies had been recruited from among the Germanic peoples. If the recovery of the land between the two Walls has been rightly associated with the Theodosian restoration, there was no reason why this area should have been seriously affected by the final withdrawal of the Roman armies. The area of dislocation would lie south of the Hadrianic frontier. It has already been remarked that the thirteen genealogies of that group of kings who were known collectively as *The Men of the North* go back to one or other of two ancestors, Ceredig or Coel Hen. We have already dealt with Ceredig, but who and what was Coel Hen?

One of the representatives of Coel Hen's family in the fifth generation was Guenddoleu, who was killed in the battle of Ardderyd in 574.[132] It seems probable that the place at which this battle was fought was the same as the modern Arthuret,[133] a few miles north of Carlisle. Nearby is the place-name Carwinley and the river name Carwhinelow. Ekwall suggests[134] that the second and third elements of Carwinley are English in origin, but is it not possible

[132] *Ann. Cam.*, *s.a.* 573.
[133] Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, I, 157, also E. Ekwall, *Dict. of English Place-Names*, *s.* Arthuret.
[134] *op. cit.*, *s.* Carwinley.

that both these names derive, as Skene suggested,[135] from Caer Guenddoleu? If these identifications are correct, Guenddoleu will have belonged to the country near the Solway. One of the descendants of Coel Hen in the sixth generation was Cadrod Calchvynydd, the second part of whose name places him with fair certainty at Kelso.[136] Of the four British kings who are recorded in the additions to the *Historia Brittonum*[137] to have fought against Hussa, fifth in succession to Ida of Bernicia, one, namely Rhydderch, was descended from Ceredig, but the other three, Morcant, Gwallaug and Urien, were all descendants of Coel Hen in the fifth generation.[138] In the sixth century therefore Coel Hen's family seem to have been located, broadly speaking, in what is now the Borderland. Guenddoleu, as we have seen, was killed in 574. Morcant, Gwallaug and Urien flourished in the years following Ida's reign, and it is fair to suppose that they were all grown men *c.* 560. Gwrgi and Peredur who represented another branch of Coel Hen's family in the fifth generation, were killed in 581.[139] If this fifth generation was born *c.* 530, Coel Hen himself will have been born *c.* 380, and will accordingly have been in the full vigour of his life when the Roman armies withdrew from Britain.

It has been suggested that Coel Hen's name is preserved in that part of Ayrshire which is called Kyle,[140] and that therefore his family was originally located there, but if the evidence of the genealogies has been correctly interpreted it is not easy to see by what process Coel Hen came to found a dynasty in territory which formed part of the kingdom of Strathclyde, and which lay so close to its capital, nor is it

[135] *op. cit.*, I, 157.
[136] W. J. Watson, *Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, 343.
[137] C. 63.
[138] W. F. Skene, *Four Ancient Books*, I, 168. For the genealogies of Morcant and Urien in the Harl. MS. see *Y Cymm.*, IX, 173-4. According to the Harl. genealogies Gwallaug belonged to the fourth generation, but a generation seems to be missing from this MS.
[139] *Ann. Camb.*, *s.a.* 580; Skene, *op. cit.*, I, 157.
[140] Watson, *op. cit.*, 127.

easy to see how Coël Hen's descendants came to be in possession of the Borderlands in the sixth century. We should rather have expected the movement which placed Coel Hen's family in these parts to have had its starting point farther south. We have seen that Coel Hen himself was probably a fully-grown man at the time of the withdrawal of the Roman forces. The second element in his name is no more than a by-name (Coel the Old), but it is evident from the genealogies and from other sources that his name contained a third element. In No. X of the Harleian genealogies[141] he is stated to be the son of Guotepauc the son of Tecmant, but there is an intrusive *map* in this genealogy, and Guotepauc is an epithet which belongs properly to Coel Hen himself, making his name Coel (Hen) Guotepauc.[142] Although the descendants of Coel Hen were commonly known as *Coeling*,[143] they were also known as "the sons of Godebawc."[144] Omitting the by-name, Coel Guotepauc seems to be the equivalent of Caelius[?] Voteporix.[145] We seem therefore to have a man bearing a name of Roman formation who was born *c.* 380, and who came to be regarded as the head of a family which by the sixth century embraced several native British dynasties mostly located in northern England and the Borderland. What kind of a man was this likely to be? We think at once of the succession of usurpers set up in the first decade of the fifth century—Marcus, Gratian and Constantine. The first two failed and the third left Britain, but a successful usurpation by a high military official who remained in the area of

[141] *Y Cymm.*, IX, 174.
[142] *Ibid.*, 174, n. 4.
[143] *Y Cymm.*, XXVIII, 208.
[144] *Ibid.*, 213.
[145] The second element of this name is found in Guortepir son of Aircol, Harl. Gen., no. II, the king who is addressed by Gildas and who is thought to be commemorated on the stone from Castell Dwyran (now in Carmarthen Museum), bearing the inscription *memoria voteporigis protictoris*, Macalister, *Corp. Insc. Ins. Celt.*, I, 342-3. There may be some element of doubt in the nominative of the name. The form on the inscription must have had a nominative *Voteporix* (*Y Cymm.*, XXVIII, 200, n. 1), but the form in the genealogies suggests a nominative *Voteporius*.

his command, and who was able to organize an army out of the remains left behind after the evacuation, might well have given Coel Hen just that position which the genealogies assign to him. I do not know of any evidence which associates Coel Hen directly with York, but if we are looking for the man who was responsible for bringing the Saxons to the north—and it was here that they came first according to Gildas—this much at least may be said, that Coel Hen satisfies several of the conditions which would be required in such a man—perhaps he satisfies them better than Vortigern does.

The earliest recorded versions of the Deiran genealogy contain four names between Soemil and Aelle. They are *uuestorualcna, uuilgils, uuscfrea and yffe*,[146] but they are names only and nothing is known of the men to whom they belonged. Yffe's successor was Aelle, the first well-authenticated king of Deira. According to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Aelle ruled from 560 to 588, but neither of these dates seem to be well-founded. Roger of Wendover places Aelle's death in 593,[147] and a passage in Bede's *De Temporum Ratione*[148] implies that he was still alive at the time of Augustine's mission in 597. The date of the foundation of the kingdom of Bernicia is securely established at 547. It was calculated by Bede from the official lists of kings and their regnal years which were kept in Northumbria from an early date. It is much more difficult to see where the Bernicians came from. The virtual absence of pagan relics from Bernicia, the date at which the kingdom was first established, and the half century of defensive warfare which followed make it certain that there can have been no invasion such as occurred in other parts of the country. We must rather think that the kingdom found its origin in what was little more than a pirate stronghold on the rock of Bamborough, the result of a small expedition

[146] CCCC 183, f65 a. The names are in the same order in BM Vesp. B VI, though there are some minor variations in spelling.

[147] *Flor. Hist.*, ed. H. O. Coxe, I, 96.

[148] C. LXVI, ed. Mommsen, *MGH Auct. Antiquiss.*, XIII, 309.

which probably set out from somewhere farther south and reached Bamborough by sea.

We may now summarize the results of this attempt to discern the more important political changes which led ultimately to the establishment of Northumbria. The most serious problem of the latter part of the fourth century, a problem upon whose solution the security of the whole of Britain south of the Forth depended, was to find some means of preventing a recurrence of the disaster of 367. That the problem was effectively solved, there is no reason whatsoever to doubt. There is less certainty about the manner and date of its solution, but so far as the evidence goes it points to a phase of vigorous warfare at the time of the Theodosian restoration, as a result of which the frontier was pushed northwards again to the line on which it had rested in the second century, that is to say to the Antonine Wall. The method of holding this reconquered territory was not to man a continuous frontier, as Lollius Urbicus had done, but to secure its extremities by the creation of two independent states, Strathclyde and Manau, which were at first under Roman control, but which later lost their Roman identity and came to be controlled by men who could indeed claim to be of Romano-British descent, but who were in fact native British kings. On the west the dynasty of Strathclyde continued without a break for many generations, and the kingdom itself remained a power in the politics of northern Britain for the next five centuries. On the east the state of Manau had a shorter history because many of its people, including their ruler Cunedda and eight of his sons, were transferred to north Wales in order to meet a dangerous Scottish threat. There is a conflict of evidence about the date of this migration, but what seems to be the more reliable source of information points to a time about the middle of the fifth century. Cunedda's eldest son remained in Manau, presumably in order to secure the southern side of the Forth against any renewal of Pictish aggression. There is evidence enough to warrant

the conjecture that the Picts did renew their attacks and that the weakened defences of Manau proved inadequate to meet them. If this was in fact the case, we can understand why it became necessary for the British to seek help elsewhere. I see no reason for doubting the testimony of Gildas, supported as it is by Bede and the *Historia Brittonum*, that the British employed Saxon mercenaries to help them in their warfare against the Picts in the fifth century. The archæological evidence is entirely in keeping with the literary, and it points to the East Riding of Yorkshire, including York itself, as the area in which the Saxons were settled. The accidental survival of a detailed tradition about Hengest's invasion of Kent has been allowed to distort the general picture and to obscure the importance of this early Saxon settlement in the north. The device of employing foreign soldiers was at first successful, but after a short while, not later than 450, the Saxons rebelled and were able to secure themselves in the possession of York and of much of the East Riding. By some process of which we have no detailed record, this nucleus developed into the kingdom of Deira. About a century later, possibly as an offshoot from Deira or somewhere farther south, a foothold was secured at Bamborough. Vigorous British efforts to dislodge the invaders were unsuccessful and the kingdom of Bernicia emerged, later to be united with Deira and to form part of the single kingdom of Northumbria.

No ordinary mortal can expect to be properly qualified to interpret late Roman, old Welsh, old English and medieval Latin records, to say nothing of the archæological evidence. It may therefore be thought presumptuous for one who cannot claim to be an expert in any of these branches of learning to have attempted to make use of them all. Yet without such a synthesis it is certain that the origins of Northumbria cannot be properly understood. Much of what I have written must be regarded as conjectural, some may be condemned forthwith as unwarranted speculation, and there are, of course, many problems upon

which I have not ventured to touch at all. But it has seemed to me, and I claim no more than this, that the sources, taken together and not in isolation, do suggest a possible sequence of events. We have become so accustomed to regarding this period of history as part of the Dark Ages that we have perhaps tended to envelop those whom we study in the darkness through which we ourselves move, to forget that this was indeed the British Heroic Age. If we have achieved no more we have perhaps achieved a better understanding of the background to that passage in the *Historia Brittonum* which reads:

Tunc Talhaern Tataguen in poemate claruit et Neirin, et Taliessin, et Bluchbard, et Cian, qui vocatur Gueinth Guaut, simul uno tempore in poemate Britannico claruerunt.[149]

[149] C. 62.