

The Anglo-Saxon Coinage and the Historian

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IN recent years there has developed a growing recognition on the part of historians that the coinage of Anglo-Saxon England was a potential source of information to them which had not been properly exploited, and this in turn has stimulated numismatists to make a fresh assessment of its many problems. It soon became apparent that this field, which had been the subject of intensive and scholarly study in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, had, since then, become increasingly neglected and that much of what had come, by constant repetition, to be accepted without question stood in need of serious revision. This work is still going on and will take some years yet to complete, but it can be said that already a clearer pattern is beginning to emerge. This article is designed to show some of the directions in which this work is leading, to give an indication to those who are not specialists in numismatics of the type of material that is available, and to show some of the ways in which it illustrates, and sometimes adds to, the factual details of Anglo-Saxon history, giving the names of unknown kings and (more important) giving reality to kings such as Redwulf, Eadberht (Praen), Baldred and Ceolwulf II, who are names and little else.

The earliest coinage of the Anglo-Saxons, which consisted of gold thrymsas followed by silver sceattas, is for the most part anonymous and the interpretation of such names as are found on the coins is open to considerable doubt. The value and interest of this coinage lies in the variety of art-forms it offers, particularly in the silver coinage which was issued during the first three quarters of the eighth century. The influence of Roman and Merovingian coinage is to be found initially in the form of imitation. But later the skill of the native artist has either developed a theme, as on PL. I, 1 reverse, showing the wolf and twins (so commonly found on Roman coins) treated in an entirely independent manner, or has evolved themes of its own based on the native art of the time. The obverse of this coin shows what may be regarded as a variant of the inhabited vine-scroll in the form of a bird in the branches of (presumably) a vine pecking at the grapes. PL. I, 2 shows an elaborately dressed bust with a hand holding a cup; PL. I, 3, shows a female centaur holding a branch in each hand with a reverse made up of four wolves' heads cunningly formed into a whorl. On PL. I, 4 there is a small head surrounded by a ringlet of leaves with, on the reverse, a variant of the dragon motif that is a feature of this coinage.

This small selection does not of course exhaust the varieties of design, which are considerable, but will, it is hoped, be sufficient to indicate the type of material that these attractive little coins offer.

The advent of the penny coinage in the last quarter of the eighth century brought this particular form of art in the coinage to an abrupt end and the first pennies are lacking in artistic merit, but it was not long before it reappeared in a revised and no less vigorous form. The first pennies, much larger and thinner coins than the sceattas, were struck by kings of Kent. They bore a general resemblance to the corresponding coinage of Pippin in Francia, and their introduction must have been prompted by the needs of the cross-channel trade. The names of the two kings that are found on them, Heaberht and Ecgbert, unknown in historical sources other than charters, serve to support the basic authenticity of these charters, all of which have at one time or another been held to be open to suspicion (PL. I, 5, 6).

The first coins in the name of Offa are by the same moneyers as were employed by the two Kentish kings and of much the same types, and there can be no doubt that at some date around 780-785 Offa took over the Canterbury mint and suppressed the coinage in the names of the Kentish kings (PL. I, 7). It was not long, however, before a series of portrait coins began to appear which for elegance and variety of design can hardly be bettered in the Anglo-Saxon series (PL. I, 8-10). It has often been said in the past that these pieces owed their inspiration to Italian artists or to the artistic circle at the court of Charlemagne. But it must be emphasized that the coinage both of the emperor and of Italy was at this time at a generally low ebb, and although isolated coins of Charlemagne bearing a portrait are known today, their derivation from the classic Roman form is apparent, whereas the portrait coins of Offa seem no less clearly to be native in their inspiration. There can be no doubt at all that they were not derived from Charlemagne's coinage.

Such evidence as there is points rather to the Anglo-Saxon coinage having exerted an influence on the continental coinage rather than the other way. Two coins of Charlemagne struck at Lucca are clearly derived directly from coins of Offa (PL. I, 12, 14, and 11, 13). Any questions as to which is the original is dispelled when it is noted that the engraver of one of the Lucca coins (PL. I, 12) has copied on to his die the final d of the moneyer's name, Alhmund—meaningless for his purpose—under the impression that it is a part of the design of the coin. This copying in Italy of Anglo-Saxon coin-types is exceptional, but is occasionally paralleled later in the series. The coin (PL. I, 15) of Pope John (perhaps John X, though Italian numismatists prefer John XII) is, for instance, clearly imitating a rare type of Edward the Elder from a north-western mint (PL. I, 16). The great period of continental imitation occurred, however, chiefly north of Italy, culminating in the eleventh century in Scandinavia.

The best of Offa's coins show the head and shoulders of the king in profile often richly draped and with the hair sometimes elaborately arranged in a series of curls to give a naturalistic effect of light and shade (PL. I, 8). On some, he is shown wearing a jewel attached to a thin chain around his neck (PL. I, 9), and on others wearing what would seem to be a triple branching spray, a feature found later on coins of Edward the Martyr and on early coins of Aethelred II.

The reverses have also provided scope for the Anglo-Saxon artists, who

develop a wide range of ornamental cruciform designs and at times introduce a coiled serpent either as the main theme or as one ancillary to the whole (PL. I, 10).

While negative evidence must always be regarded with some suspicion, it is worth noting a recent study by R. H. M. Dolley and D. M. Metcalf, which has mapped the isolated find spots of pennies struck up to approximately 820, the greater part of which were in the names of Mercian kings. This has shown unexpectedly that the area of their circulation seems to have been contained within an arc drawn from the Wash to Southampton Water and consequently excluded a great part of Mercia in addition to most of Wessex. The evidence of find-spots of sceattas does not suggest that, in these areas, coinage of the smaller pieces continued for a number of years after the introduction of the penny but rather that no currency was at that time in general circulation there.¹

This evidence of find-spots confirms the generally accepted view that the bulk of the coinage of the Mercian kings at this time emanated from Canterbury. The likelihood that there was also a mint in East Anglia will be discussed below, but it can be said here that there is good evidence of a mint having worked at Rochester (probably for the bishop) under Ceolwulf I, as a few coins reading DOROBREBIA are known (PL. I, 17). This has generally been regarded as a mistake for DOROVERNIA and the coins have therefore been given to Canterbury, but it would seem rather to be a survival of the Romano-British Durobrevis, the more so as coins reasonably attributable to Rochester on other grounds are found in the name of Eggerht of Wessex (PL. I, 18).

Mention must be made of a curious and unique gold coin bearing the name of Offa which is an imitation of a dinar of Caliph Al-Mansur dated 157 A.H. (=A.D. 774) (PL. I, 19). The purpose of this coin is not clear, but it has been suggested that it is one of the mancuses referred to in the letter from Pope Leo to Coenwulf as having been sent by Offa to the Holy See.² This explanation is not without its difficulties. Although the engraver of this die was not familiar with the Arabic language, a fact that is shown by his having placed the words *Offa Rex* upside down in relation to the Arabic legend, it is hard to accept that the royal clerk who authorized the die would not at least have known that the language was one used by the Muslims, whether or not he went so far as to read the marginal inscription of the obverse which in translation is 'Mohammed is the Apostle of God, who sent him with the doctrine and true faith to prevail over every religion'. The likely reaction of the Pope to such coins may also be gauged from the forceful views expressed by Innocent IV in the thirteenth century when he received a report from the pontifical legate who accompanied Louis IX on the crusades that the crusaders were issuing besants and drachmas with the name of Mahomet and dated with the Musulman era. The Pope approved of the legate's action in excommunicating the Christians of St. Jean of Acre and of Tripoli and ordered that this abominable practice should cease forthwith.³ The alternative explanation, namely that the coin was struck for the purpose of international trade, particularly in the

¹ *Brit. Numism. J.*, xxviii, 459-66.

² *Numism. Chron.* 1958, Pres: Address, pp. 5-6.

³ G. Schlumberger, *Numismatique de l'orient latin* (1954), p. 139.

Mediterranean where the dinar was the accepted gold currency, is more prosaic and is perhaps to be preferred for that very reason.

The history of East Anglia up to the time of Eadmund, murdered by the Danes in 870, is notoriously obscure, but it is possible, on the evidence of the coins, to postulate two predecessors to him on the East Anglian throne, sufficiently well established each to have issued a substantial coinage. This is shown by a sequence of coins by the same moneyers and of linking types found in the names of two historically unknown kings, Aethelstan and Aethelweard (PL. I, 20, 21), and of the historically known Eadmund (PL. I, 22). It emerges also that coins of similar types and by the same moneyers were also struck for the Mercian king Beornwulf (PL. I, 23), who was killed by the East Angles in 825, so that it seems clear that the reigns of Aethelstan and Aethelweard filled the gap from 825 to Eadmund's accession in 855 and that, prior to this, the mint employed by the East Anglian kings was either in the hands of, or available to, the kings of Mercia.

Indeed, tracing the series backwards from the coins of Beornwulf which are associated with East Anglia, it is found that continuously back to the time of Offa, a group segregates itself readily from the bulk of the coinage which emanated from Canterbury. The moneyers produce a consecutive chain of evidence, the style is less neat and a feature of the legends is the occasional use of runes, which do not appear to be found on coins of this time that can be associated with Canterbury.

In the Kentish series of Offa's coins there occurs at the end of his reign a break when for a short time the name of Eadberht Praen, who was placed on the Kentish throne in opposition to Coenwulf, is found on the coins. The two coins illustrated (PL. II, 24, 25), one in the name of Eadberht the other in that of Offa, are struck from the same reverse die. A coin of Coenwulf of the same reverse type has recently come to light (PL. II, 26), thus completing the series—Offa—Eadberht—Coenwulf. At what would seem the same time a similar break occurs in the East Anglian series, when the name of a historically unknown king, Eadwald, is found on coins of even greater rarity than those of Eadberht (PL. II, 29). Slender as the evidence is, this would suggest that an uprising may have taken place in East Anglia on Offa's death similar to the uprising of the men of Kent.

The execution of the East Anglian king, Aethilberht, by Offa in 794 is one of the few facts in East Anglian history that has come down to us today in documentary sources. Coins are known in the name of a king, Aethilberht, though only two or three have survived (PL. II, 27). These, like the three coins illustrated (PL. II, 28-30), are by the moneyer Lul. On the Aethilberht coin, moreover, the moneyer's name is written in runes. This coin has been attributed to the Kentish king of this name, whose dates are tentatively given as 725-762, but for the reasons just given an East Anglian attribution seems preferable, in which case Aethilberht's coins would break into the series of coins of Offa of that area. This would support Sir Frank Stenton's suggestion that 'it is natural to suppose that Offa killed him (Aethilberht) because he stood in some way for the independence of his kingdom'.⁴

The coinage in the name of the kings of Kent, which had been revived in the

⁴ Sir F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (1947), p. 209.

time of Coenwulf by his brother Cuthred is finally brought to an end when in 825 Ecgberht of Wessex captured Canterbury. At some time between Cuthred's death in 807 and Ecgberht's arrival in Canterbury there was a king ruling in Kent by the name of Baldred of whom nothing is known from written historical sources beyond the fact he was expelled from Kent by Ecgberht in 825 (Anglo-Saxon Chron. sub. ann. 823). No charters of this king have survived⁵, but coins in his name are found, struck by eight moneyers and in a variety of types. Between 35 and 40 of his coins are known today (PL. II, 31-2), and, though this number is small enough, it compares with between 250 and 275 surviving coins of Offa and suggests that Baldred's reign is likely not to have been as ephemeral as the bare mention in the Chronicle and the absence of contemporary charter evidence might otherwise imply.

The state of uncertainty in the mint at Canterbury following the arrival of Ecgberht, who had up to that time had no coinage of his own, is well reflected on the coins by both the royal and archiepiscopal moneyers. These for a short time omit the names of the king and the archbishop respectively and have in their place the name of the moneyer with, on the reverse, the mint-name *Dorobernia Civitas* (PL. II, 33-4). It will be noted, incidentally, that it is the Romano-British form of the name that is used, a form that persisted on the coins down to the time of Athelstan.

Coins bearing the names of the archbishops of Canterbury are found from the time of Offa to that of Edward the Elder, when they cease abruptly and are not found again until the later middle ages. The coins appear to reflect in some measure the effectiveness of the temporal rights of the archbishops. Those of Jaenberht (PL. II, 35), and of Æthelheard (766-805), combine the names of the archbishop on the one side with that of the relevant Mercian king on the other. On what are believed to be the earliest of Æthelheard's coins he used the title *Pontifex* (PL. II, 36). The coins of Wulfred (805-832) (PL. II, 37), show for the first time the tonsured bust of the archbishop and abandon the king's name; in its place is found, as on the royal coinage from Canterbury, the name of the moneyer. The same procedure continues during the greater part of the archiepiscopacy of Ceolnoth (833-870), but towards its end a significant change takes place when the bust of the archbishop is replaced by that of the king (PL. II, 38). This practice is continued by his successor Aethelred. From then on until the death of Plegmund in 914, the archbishop's bust is not found again, and, although it is known from the Grateley decrees of Athelstan that the archbishop had the right to two moneyers at Canterbury, compared with the king's four, his coins are no more identifiable today than are those of the abbot, to whom the right to one moneyer is granted.

The bulk of Plegmund's coins are of the same general type, but among his earlier coins attention may perhaps be drawn to a variety, of which few specimens have survived, which bears his name and the title *Episc(opus)* (as opposed to

⁵ Professor Whitelock has, however, pointed out to me that there is a reference to him in B.C.S.421 (A.D. 838) where land is said to have been granted by Baldred, which grant was considered by some to have been invalid as having been made during Baldred's flight.

Archiepiscopus) followed by three letters, in the centre, which appear to be XP (or D) F (PL. II, 39). These letters have been tentatively interpreted as *Christus*, but if, as is usual, they are intended to complete the outer legend, this is not entirely satisfactory and numismatists would welcome an alternative and better interpretation, perhaps, from those who may have found a similar form in documents.

Ecgberht's defeat of Mercia in 825 appears, for a time at least, to have deprived the Mercian kings of their facilities for minting in Kent, leaving them only the East Anglian mint with its limited output. The Wessex king was not slow to inaugurate at Canterbury a coinage of his own which he later extended to Winchester. But it is his capture of London, in 829 that is signalized in a most striking way by the issue of a coin—of which only a single specimen has survived—which bears in full in three lines across the whole of the reverse the words + LVNDONIA CIVIT (PL. II, 40). It is interesting to note that when Alfred regained London in 886 he too departed from the normal practice of issuing coins which gave no indication of their source by placing the monogram of London prominently on the reverse (PL. II, 41). Clearly the capture of this city was an event to be recorded and publicized.

Although on the restoration of Wiglaf to the Mercian throne Ecgberht appears to have ceased coining in London—the moneyer Redmund, who had struck for him there, transfers to the service of Wiglaf—at some time during the reign of Æthelwulf the Wessex and Mercian kings once again had access to a common mint. Three moneyers are found to strike for both kings and a remarkable coin was recently acquired by the British Museum which combines an obverse bearing the name of Berhtwulf and his bust, with a reverse bearing the name of king Æthelwulf (PL. II, 42).

The names of two minting authorities are rarely found together in the Anglo-Saxon series and where they do occur can generally be explained. They are found, as has been seen, on the early issues of the archbishops of Canterbury, where the name of the Mercian king is added. This must surely have been done to show that this temporal right stemmed from the king. They occur on odd coins of the late ninth and mid tenth century from the northern part of the country, where the names of Cnut and Alfred are found together on a piece of clearly imitative style (PL. II, 43), and again on a coin that combines the names of Æthelstan and Anlaf, a piece the exact significance of which still needs further investigation (PL. II, 44). The style is a trifle unorthodox and one cannot rule out the possibility of imitation. But it may on the other hand have some as yet unappreciated significance.

In the case of the Berhtwulf/Æthelwulf coin the question of imitation can be ruled out. Not only had this practice, which grew up from the time of Alfred, not effectively started, but a normal coin of Berhtwulf's is struck from the same obverse die as the coin with the combined names, so that in this case it is possible to say with confidence that here is a coin officially produced bearing the names of the kings of Mercia and Wessex, and that it is the name of the Mercian king that occupies the more prominent position beside his bust. Such a coin can hardly be the whim of a moneyer or mint master: it must surely have been struck for a

specific purpose, probably to mark some notable event. Sir Frank Stenton has suggested to me that such an event might possibly have been the transfer of Berkshire from Mercia to Wessex. It was Mercian in 844-5, West Saxon in 871, and almost certainly in 849 (when Alfred was born at Wantage). There must have been some kind of formal agreement between the kings before a change like this could take effect. Berhtwulf as king in possession would naturally take the initiative. As the ealdorman of Berkshire afterwards appears in the service of the king of Wessex, there must have been some public occasion on which he became Æthelwulf's man. A new coinage intended to circulate at least in the middle Thames area would not be inappropriate *c.* 845-6.

Analogous in some ways are three coins in the names respectively of Alfred of Wessex, Ceolwulf II of Mercia and Halfdan, Danish king of Northumbria (PL. III, 45-7). The feature common to these is the revival of a Roman type found on fourth century gold, showing two emperors seated with a winged victory above them. The direct reversion to Roman types, though not unparalleled on the Anglo-Saxon penny coinage, is most unusual, and its appearance on coins in the name of three contemporary rulers has naturally raised the question of its possible significance.

In considering this a useful first step is to try to establish which ruler was the pioneer in introducing, albeit ephemerally, a type so remarkable in the context of ninth-century Anglo-Saxon coinage. Much has been written and varying conclusions reached, but I want to suggest that, regardless of which may be the first, we may be reasonably confident that the coin of Halfdan is the last. It is clearly an imitative piece, and to regard it as anything else means dating it to Halfdan's sojourn in London from 871 and making it not only the prototype of the other two but the prototype as well of the well-known London monogram type used more than a decade later by Alfred. Such an argument can hardly be tenable.

If it is accepted that the Northumbrian coin stands apart, there remain the two in the names of Alfred and Ceolwulf, which, while differing in detail, as well they might if the one came from the Canterbury mint and the other from London, are of the same general standard of workmanship. It is interesting to compare these with two other coins in the names of Ceolwulf and Alfred which are not only similar in type but are by the same moneyer (PL. III, 48-9). Clearly the slighting reference in the Chronicle to Ceolwulf as 'a foolish king's thegn', and the implication there given that he was a mere tool of the Danes, does less than justice to a king who was in a position to employ six moneyers on a coinage as good as Alfred's and which was in part at any rate issued at a mint used by the latter. The coins tend strongly to confirm the evidence of the charters, which show Ceolwulf continuing the traditional Mercian forms of government. He comes in his proper sequence in a statement of the bishop of Worcester's title to Water Eaton in 904 (B.C.S. 607), and it seems clear that he was a king *de facto*.

The two coins, depicting the two emperors, must surely be an issue made for a specific purpose. The coin of Alfred is virtually the only one on which he uses the title *Rex Anglo*⁶ which one would normally expand to *Rex Anglorum* but which, as

⁶ He is styled *Rex A* on a single coin of BMC type V.

Stevenson has pointed out, is equally susceptible of expansion to *Rex Anglorum-Saxonum* or *Anglo-Saxonum* which he compares with the *Rex Angul-Saxonum* found in Asser's *Life* and in charters⁷.

The coin of Alfred can, on numismatic grounds, be dated 875± and there is no reason not to accept approximately the same date for Ceolwulf's. One would seek to see in these issues the record of some agreement between the rulers of Wessex and of Mercia. A possible event would be Alfred's recognition of Ceolwulf as king in 874, which would fit well enough the dating of the coins on numismatic grounds.

Alfred's reign produced another example of an unexpected combination of types. In the Danelaw a substantial coinage had developed in the last decade of the tenth century, in the name of king Eadmund, who had been murdered by the Danes in 870 (PL. III, 50), and, it is of interest to note, had within a quarter of a century of his death been canonized. The name appears on the coins as *Sanctus Eadmundus Rex*. The source of this substantial coinage remains in doubt. The bulk of them have a characteristic style of their own, which may indicate that they are the product of a mint in East Anglia, or possibly at Lincoln, and a large number have moneyers with more or less mangled Continental-Germanic names. A few have affinities with the coins of the Scandinavian kingdom of York and one or two, indeed, appear to bear the mint name of York. Other have affinities with the products of the Canterbury mint, and on one rare variety the name of Alfred, described as *Alfred Rex Do* (the usual form of identifying the Canterbury mint on his coins), is found combined with the normal obverse of the St. Eadmund memorial coinage (PL. III, 51). This would seem to indicate a measure of economic unity between the Danelaw and Wessex, a feature further reflected in the fact that Alfred and Guthrum-Athelstan shared a common mint and moneyers. Two coins by the moneyer Elda, the first in the name of Alfred, the second in that of Guthrum-Athelstan, are from the same reverse die (PL. III, 52-3).

One more coin of Alfred's must be discussed. This is a piece considerably larger than the penny—the specimen weighs 161½ grs. compared with a penny of 20-25 grs.—and is the only occurrence in the Anglo-Saxon series of a silver coin of larger denomination than the penny (PL. III, 54). The reverse has been read as *Eli Mo* (*netarius*) but latterly the view has been convincingly put forward that it should rather be read as *Elimo* (*sina*), a form found on a unique coin of Pippin's⁸ (PL. III, 55). If this is so, Alfred's coin would have been issued for the purpose of making royal alms, possibly for payments to the Holy See in Rome, but that it was not struck exclusively for this purpose is suggested by the fact that the two surviving specimens were both found in these islands. They could in part, at any rate, have been used as the alms which, Asser tells us, Alfred made to the English minsters in rotation.

Contemporary with Alfred's coinage in the midlands and the south there developed a remarkable coinage in the Scandinavian kingdom of York in the names of two kings, Siefred and Cnut. Up to this time the currency of Northum-

⁷ Asser's *Life of King Alfred* (ed W. H. Stevenson, 1904), pp. 151-2.

⁸ *Numism. Chron.*, 1954, 76 ff.

bria had consisted of the small copper coins, known to numismatists as stycas, that had been issued by the kings of the old Northumbrian line and by the archbishops of York. These as a whole are of little distinction, but a reasonably large issue in the name of a king Redwulf (PL. III, 56), is of interest to the historian because, outside the coins, the only other reference to him is found in Roger of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* where, under the year 844, he says that he succeeded Ethelred on his expulsion from the kingdom; and 'when, hastily invested with the crown, he fought a battle with the pagans at Alutthelia, he and ealdorman Alfred fell with a large part of their subjects, and then Ethelred reigned again.'⁹ Without some confirmatory evidence, a thirteenth-century source could hardly be accepted as reliable. As it is, the evidence of the coins suggests that Roger had access to some northern annals now lost and entitles one to treat more seriously than would otherwise be the case his other statements about that kingdom.

This rather drab series appears suddenly to be broken by a splendid silver penny in the name of a king Eanred (PL. III, 57), which, as the only historically known king of the name at this period was Eanred of Northumbria, has been attributed, though not without considerable reservations, to that ruler. This coin—the only one known—was found at Trewhiddle in Cornwall, in a hoard consisting of coins of the Wessex and Mercian kings and the archbishop of Canterbury, and on stylistic grounds it appears to date from some ten years after the death of Eanred. It has affinities with coins of Æthelwulf and Berhtwulf, and in the view of students today is thought more likely to be an issue by an historically unknown king ruling contemporaneously with them, perhaps in the midlands, rather than an issue of the Northumbrian king into whose currency it in no way fits.

The great numismatic source for the last quarter of the ninth century is a vast treasure, probably Viking loot lost c.903, discovered at Cuerdale in Lancashire in 1840. The full extent of the hoard will never be known, but 7,000 coins were recorded and nearly 1,000 ounces of silver in the form of ingots and ornaments, the latter mostly cut up, presumably to facilitate melting. This great treasure, which has now been widely dispersed, is in urgent need of a full reassessment in the light of modern research, but the light it already throws on the Northumbrian coinage of the time can hardly fail to be of interest to a historian, seeking for any crumb of information on this dark period.

One feature of the hoard was the inclusion of a group of some 3,000 Northumbrian coins all closely connected and bearing for the most part the names of the two kings Siefred and Cnut already mentioned (PL. III., 58-9), though some have simply religious inscriptions such as *Mirabilia Fecit* or *Dominus Deus Rex*. Up to the time of the discovery at Cuerdale, coins of this group had only been recorded (and in trifling quantities) from a comparable, though slightly later, hoard from Harkirke, also in Lancashire, and since that date no more than isolated specimens have been found. It must not be assumed, therefore, from their plentifulness today

⁹ *English Historical Documents*, I, 256. Sir Frank Stenton has pointed out to me that Roger's form for the battle-site, cannot be identified with Elvet (in 762 Ælfetee), and is really unknown. Professor Whitelock tells me that she is in agreement with this view.

that the issue was necessarily on the scale that this would imply. On the contrary, the greater part of those surviving are in sparklingly fresh condition, suggesting that most of them had had little, if any, circulation. It seems likely that the chance finding of this great treasure has in fact presented us in the Northumbrian series, as it undoubtedly has in that of Alfred, with a distorted picture of the currency of the north. Quite probably the issue was of relatively short duration, immediately prior to the deposit, and I would suggest that it may have started in this country about 895 and lasted just over the turn of the century.

Which of the two kings came first cannot as yet be decided with certainty but, current thinking favours the reversal of the accepted order and puts Siefred ahead of Cnut. The close interrelation of the two rulers is, however, reflected by coins (PL. III, 61), on which the name of both appear (the reading Cnut Rex has to be made by taking the letters at the ends of the cross, CNUT, and then taking those between, REX). It will be noted that Siefred, on this coin, does not bear the title *Rex*. The coins in the name of Cnut alone emanate, where a mint name occurs, from York (PL. III, 59), like those of Siefred, and also from the ancient port of Quentovic at the mouth of the Canche, which had been a minting place of the Carolingian rulers (PL. III, 60).

Here then we have evidence of a Viking community based on York, but controlling or having controlled Quentovic, sufficiently established in Northumbria to introduce in the last years of the ninth century a silver currency of good quality and adequate execution such as the north had never seen before. One can probably identify the Siefred of the coins with the raider of that name who, according to Æthelweard, harried the coast of England in 894 while Guthfrith was still alive. Less acceptable, as Sir Frank Stenton has pointed out,¹⁰ is the identification of Cnut with Guthfrith himself, which has been widely canvassed. Guthfrith, especially with the precedent of Sigfrith, is hardly likely to have allowed a mere nickname to have appeared on his coins even had he been known by it, of which no evidence exists.

The Cuerdale hoard also contained a great range of pieces in the name of Alfred, but from a style that precludes their having been struck at any mint under his control. These are the 'imitative' pieces to which reference has been made and they were probably issued in areas under Scandinavian control. That the Scandinavians were content to issue coins in the name of the Wessex king is shown by the existence of a few coins combining his name on the obverse with the mint-name of Lincoln on the reverse (PL. III, 62). There are, moreover, good grounds for considering that the coins which bear his name (without however the royal title) coupled with the word ORSNAFORDA (PL. III, 63), can be more properly attributed to a north-country mint, possibly Horseforth in Yorkshire, than to the hitherto generally accepted mint of Oxford. The similarity of the reverse type to that on the coin of Siefred will be apparent (PL. III, 64).

More controversial is a coin which would seem clearly to belong to the same general group (PL. III, 65). It bears the name of a *Sihtric Comes* and was issued by a moneyer with the Frankish name Gundibertus at a mint spelt SCELFOR, which

¹⁰ *Op. cit.* in note 4, p. 260. n.

has been identified as Shelford, Notts. The six-winged archangel with a forked beard on the Shelford cross-fragment, even if he is eleventh century, points to the place being more than a village settlement in earlier times. But who this earl Sihtric was remains a mystery. Only two of his coins have survived, both from the Cuerdale hoard, but their very existence and the competent manner in which they are struck—so unlike many of the 'imitative' pieces—suggests that he must have been a person of importance in that area.

The Northumbrian coinage which follows is also of interest. Three coins struck at York in the first quarter of the tenth century are illustrated (PL. IV, 66-8). The object on the first of these three coins has been identified as the iron glove of Thor and that on the second as the hammer of Thor, but this latter explanation is not entirely satisfactory as the same object is occasionally found on coins of this period of clearly Christian origin bearing the name of St. Peter. An explanation of the bow and arrow has still to be offered but it is apparent that this little group of early tenth-century Northumbrian coins could be an interesting subject for iconographical study.

Coming nearer the middle of the century we find a group of coins that reflect what is found in documentary sources. Mr. Alistair Campbell in his edition of the *Encomium Emmae Reginae*¹¹ has collected and compared the various accounts of the magic banner of the Danes which had 'the power to predict the outcome of battle. If those before whom it was borne were to be victorious, a raven would appear upon it flapping his wings. But if those who followed the banner were to be defeated, the raven would seem to droop' . . . 'It would not always bring victory to him before whom it was borne, but death to him who bore it'. The English are said to have captured a banner called *Hraefn* or *Raefen* from the Danes in Devonshire in 878. There can be little doubt that the banner shown on the coin illustrated (PL. IV, 69), combined with a triquetra on the obverse, is in fact intended to be the famous banner. It is found on this coin of Sihtric and also on coins of Anlaf, who is likely to be Anlaf Sihtricson, and of Regnald Guthfrithson. These coins provide us with the earliest drawing of it.

Moreover, on coins in the name of Anlaf, which have survived in reasonable quantities, the raven is found (PL. IV, 70). These are attributed to Anlaf Guthfrithson and the whole group has been dated to the period 939-941.

During the reign of Edward the Elder there is found in the north-west, probably at Chester, an unusual blossoming of what one may call pictorial types on the coins. These take the form of drawings of churches and of a variety of floral patterns (PL. IV, 71-3). Other designs are a Roman gate, similar to one found on copper coins of the Constantinian period, a bird, and a hand of providence pointing downwards out of a cloud, with occasionally two fingers in the act of benediction. This sudden out-cropping, in this one area alone, of pictorial types proved to be of relatively short duration, though a church is found on York coins of Athelstan and an occasional coin of the flower type is found among those of Edmund and his immediate successors. But it is in Edgar's reign that a direct harking back to Edward's and even Alfred's types is found. A halfpenny of

¹¹ Camden Society, LXXII, 96-97.

Edgar's by the moneyer Oswine (PL. IV, 74), is clearly struck in imitation of the penny of Edward's by the moneyer Iofermund (PL. IV, 73). As in the case cited earlier, the source of the design can be established by the fact that the engraver of the coin of Edgar has blindly inserted in his design the two last letters of the name of Edward's moneyer, letters that for the purpose of his inscription were meaningless.

The London monogram type introduced by Alfred was of short duration, but in a great find made at Chester in 1950 a halfpenny in the name of Edgar with this type was discovered (PL. IV, 75). Here again is a direct and conscious revival of a type which in this case lapsed perhaps three quarters of a century earlier, and it is likely that the halfpenny of Alfred recently acquired by the British Museum (PL. IV, 76), was the actual prototype, as the designs follow one another closely, down to such details as the pyramid of pellets below the monogram, which are not found on other halfpence.

Whether this conscious harking back to types of Alfred and Edward is of significance it is for students of other branches of Anglo-Saxon studies to decide. To the numismatist it appears sufficiently curious to warrant bringing to notice.

The reign of Edward the Elder produced the first of three surviving gold pennies. The others are of Aethelred II (PL. IV, 77) and Edward the Confessor. All are struck from normal dies prepared for the silver coinage. Our surprise is not so much at the existence of these gold coins, but rather that so few have survived. Professor Whitelock has pointed out¹² how frequently legacies of mancuses or marks of gold are made. In King Edred's will, moreover, specific instructions are given that '2,000 mancuses of gold are to be taken and minted into mancuses' and given to the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishops of Winchester and Dorchester 'to distribute them throughout the bishoprics for the sake of God and the redemption of my soul'.¹³ Not one of these has survived. But in these three coins we have tangible evidence that gold was minted in the later Anglo-Saxon period. This is not to say that an attempt was necessarily made at a bi-metallic currency. On the contrary, Edred's coins were specifically stated to have been ordered for distribution to the bishoprics and the coin of Edward the Confessor was found in taking down the church of St. Clement at Worcester.¹⁴ The circumstances in which the coin of Æthelred was found are not known, except that it was discovered at Hellingly in Sussex about the year 1808, but the coin of Edward the Elder is known to have been found in a village by the lake of Geneva that lay on a pilgrim road to Rome.

The practice of offering gold at shrines was widespread in the near East and resulted, as Professor Lombard has pointed out, in the sterilization in the treasuries of the Syrian and Egyptian churches of a substantial proportion of what should have constituted the medium of trade.¹⁵ It seems best, in want of further evidence, to regard these gold coins as struck for some specific purpose, such as offerings,

¹² D. Whitelock, *Anglo-Saxon Wills* (1930), e.g. 11, 21, 25.

¹³ *English Historical Documents*, I, 512.

¹⁴ *Brit. Numism. J.*, xxv, 264.

¹⁵ Lombard, *Annales—Économies, Sociétés, Civilisation* (Paris, 1947), pp. 143 ff.

rather than as an ephemeral attempt to introduce a gold coinage as such. The parallel of the *Elimosina* coins of Alfred will be in mind.

Much could be said of the coinage of Athelstan, but it will be sufficient to mention that, following the Grateley decrees, the inclusion on the coins of the name of the mint in addition to that of the moneyer, albeit only for a short time, makes it possible to begin to form some assessment from this source, which becomes increasingly valuable in the last century before the conquest, of the relative development of the boroughs. In this respect Chester stands out as probably the most important minting place at this time, owing in part, no doubt, to the Welsh silver mines.

Among the mints that first appear in this reign is *Weardburh* (PL. IV, 78), which may confidently be identified with the burgh which Athelæd is recorded to have built in 914, the whereabouts of which, however, remains in doubt. On numismatic grounds it is now suggested that it should be looked for in the west midlands, possibly in the country that marches with Wales.

The extension of Athelstan's grip over the country is reflected in the use, for the first time on the coins, of the title *Rex Totius Britanniae* (PL. IV, 79), but the title *Rex Saxorum* is also found, chiefly in the north midlands.

In recent years there has been growing appreciation of the fact that a major monetary reform was carried out in the last years of Edgar's reign. The only reference to this in documentary sources is found in Roger of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* where, under the year 975, he writes: 'Then he ordered a new coinage to be made throughout the whole of England, because the old was so debased by the crime of clippers that a penny hardly weighed a halfpenny on the scales.'¹⁶ The reason given is undoubtedly the wrong one, if one may judge from the substantial amount of coins surviving in hoards, but it would be the natural one for a thirteenth-century writer to assume and was probably a gloss of his own. The date, too, may be a year or two out—973 is currently favoured as more likely—but the basic fact that in the last years of Edgar's reign a major monetary reform was carried out is amply borne out by the coins.

The effect of the reform was to introduce a uniform coinage for the whole country of a type which (with a single exception) always bore the head of the king on the one side and on the other usually a variety of cruciform designs, and to ensure that thereafter the name of the mint as well as the moneyer invariably appeared on the coins.

The type once introduced went on regardless of a change in ruler and was itself changed every six years. Thus coins of the same type are found in the names of Edgar, Edward the Martyr and Aethelred II (PL. IV, 80-2), until in 979, a new type was introduced with on the reverse a hand proceeding from a cloud. A variant of this type sometimes shows the hand, as on some of the coins of Edward the Elder, in the act of benediction (PL. IV, 83).

Vast quantities of Aethelred's coins used in payment of Danegeld found their way to Scandinavia and the unsettled conditions there are reflected by the number that have turned up in hoards. This great importation of English coins

¹⁶ *English Historical Documents*, I, 258.

into Scandinavia seems to end immediately after king Edward abolished the *heregeld* and paid off the crews of his warship in 1051-2. If this really works out, it goes far to settle the great question of why the coins appear in such bulk in the north in previous decades.

That Edgar should have successfully introduced such a reform in the comparatively untroubled last years of his reign need cause no surprise. That Aethelred should have successfully maintained it and so produced the best-managed currency of western Europe is an achievement not to be belittled. The recognition of the existence of this managed currency affects our whole view of the efficiency of English government in the last pre-conquest century. By way of contrast comparison may be made with the coinage of Swein Estrithson in Denmark, which provides an excellent example of what happens when a currency is *not* managed as the word can be applied to the English series.

The issue of periodical new types and the withdrawal of the coinage previously in circulation called for the establishment of many new mints. Upwards of 80 are in fact found operating at one time or another in the last century before the Conquest. These mints in turn had to be supplied with dies, and it is becoming apparent that centres were set up for the purpose of distributing and probably actually producing them. The centres from which the various mints drew their supplies serve to outline the administrative areas into which the country was divided in Aethelred's time.

The operation of some of the mints reflect the vagaries of the campaigns against the Danes. The moneyers of Wilton for instance are found to withdraw to the stronghold of Sarum after Wilton had been sacked by the Danes in 1003, and those of Ilchester similarly move to Cadbury in the face of danger—*c.* 1010—only to move back into the valley a few years later when the immediate danger was past.

As a source of personal names the Anglo-Saxon coinage, and the coinage of this period in particular, is of peculiar value. Many names survive today in later transliterations only, where the copier may well have adapted the form to one familiar to him. The coins provide a wealth of personal names in forms which must of necessity be contemporary. At London alone the names of some 140 moneyers are found between Aethelred's accession and the Norman conquest with proportionately less in the smaller mints. There can hardly be another source so rich in uncontaminated forms of personal names.

One further coin of Aethelred must be mentioned (PL. IV, 84). It is the one exception to the rule that the king's head was to appear on the coins. As will be seen it bears on the obverse the name of *Æthelræd Rex Anglorum* with as type the Lamb of God. On the other side is the Dove of the Holy Spirit. No convincing explanation has been offered to account for the introduction of this remarkable type, which was closely copied in Denmark by Harthacnut and more crudely by some of his successors. But it has been firmly established by R. H. M. Dolley on numismatic grounds that the long-cherished tradition that it is to be associated with the millennium cannot be sustained. In fact its issue dates from about the year 1009.

The competence of the later Anglo-Saxon coinage stands out in greater contrast when it is compared with the deplorable pieces produced in contemporary Normandy, and it is not surprising that at the conquest, the Normans continued the currency they found in these islands and left behind in Normandy their inferior products.

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