

NORTHUMBRIAN NUMISMATIC CHRONOLOGY IN THE NINTH CENTURY

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THE subject of this paper is the coinage struck in Northumbria in the ninth century by the kings of Northumbria and by the archbishops of York.¹ The coins are normally described as sceattas if their appearance is silvery and as stycas if they are predominantly copper. They will be familiar to most numismatists. What I propose to do is to review the coinage as a whole and offer a scheme for a major redating of most of the coins. It may be reassuring to know that the proposal though drastic is not altogether revolutionary. The circumstances are peculiar. In an article published in the *British Numismatic Journal* thirteen years ago² Mr. C. S. S. Lyon arranged the coins in their proper chronological order and established with reasonable accuracy the period of time for which each king and archbishop struck. It would be reasonable to suppose that this would make a substantial redating of the coinage impossible. In fact for a variety of reasons it does not. Without rejecting any of Mr. Lyon's main conclusions it will be possible to adopt a scheme of dating that looks very different from the scheme which has been accepted until now; and this is the course of action for which I shall be arguing.

An initial difficulty of any discussion of the problems involved is that this is a coinage that for one reason or another people do not take very seriously. Partly this is because the coins are not themselves attractive. Partly this is because the coins are very common, and familiarity breeds contempt. A number of factors combine to make them unpopular. It may be that some of this unpopularity is deserved—there are certainly coinages of greater significance—but it is not altogether deserved. Much of the trouble stems from an accident of history. A Viking army captured York on 1 November 867, and Scandinavian occupation of northern England in the years that followed destroyed the civilization for which the so-called styca coinage had been struck. The records of every community north of the Humber were lost. The administrative system of the kingdom collapsed. The royal family which had ruled in York for two hundred years came to an end.³ The old frontiers of the kingdom changed. It was sixty years before an independent Anglo-Saxon king again ruled in York and there can by then have been very little to recall the ninth-century kingdom. By the time historians got round to writing the history of that kingdom there was still less. As a result there is practically nothing to show that the kings and archbishops for whom the coins were struck were people of flesh and blood and it is difficult in the circumstances to see the study of the coins as more than an academic exercise. If the information at our disposal about ninth-century Northumbria were more detailed the position would be very different. There is nothing inherently uninteresting about the coinage of Northumbria. Northumbria was after all a kingdom of vast size and great traditions. For generations the authority of its kings

¹ This is a slightly revised version of a paper read to the British Numismatic Society on 25 Mar. 1969.

² *BNJ* xviii, pt. 2 (1956), pp. 227–42.

³ There were kings in Northumbria after 867 but it is not clear that they were kings of Northumbria and they were not of the old royal house.

had been recognized throughout northern England and the Scottish Lowlands, in Edinburgh and in Carlisle as well as in York and Bamburgh. At the beginning of the ninth century the Northumbrian kingdom still stretched from the Humber to the Firth of Forth and from the North Sea to the Irish Sea; the authority of the archbishops of York was still recognized by the bishop of Whithorn in Galloway and by the bishop of Mayo in Ireland as well as by bishops of Hexham and Lindisfarne; and there was an enormous respect on the continent of Europe for the tradition of scholarship and learning associated with the country of Bede. In the course of the ninth century this power and prestige may have diminished; but even in decline it must have been a kingdom of importance.

The pity is that there is this lack of information about it. Up to 806 the succession of events in Northumbria can be established from a series of entries added in the eleventh century to one version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, originally compiled at the end of the ninth century, and from entries in a twelfth-century compilation known as the *History of the Kings* and attributed to the historian Simeon of Durham. The entries in this compilation and the entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* are derived from the same source, a detailed chronicle begun in Northumbria towards the end of the eighth century and kept up to date until 806. After 806 the situation is different. There are no entries in any version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* about the internal affairs of Northumbria between 806 and 867. The information about Northumbria in the *History of the Kings* and in other historical works attributed to Simeon of Durham dwindles to information about the succession and death of its kings evidently extracted from a document much less authoritative than the chronicle on which the earlier entries are based. There is some information of much the same character in a work called the *Flores Historiarum* compiled in the thirteenth century by Roger of Wendover; it is not obviously more authoritative. Otherwise there is an occasional reference to Northumbrian affairs in documents not primarily concerned with Northumbrian history; some of these are interesting but they do not add up to very much. There is little here to show that the issuers of the coinage once had real existence.

Such a state of affairs is not satisfactory. But it has one quite salutary effect. It throws the numismatist back on his own resources. If he wants to convince himself that these were kings who really reigned and archbishops who really presided over the Northumbrian church his course of action is clear. The most tangible evidence for the existence of these kings and archbishops is the existence of coins carrying their names. These coins were struck in the ninth century, so their evidence is likely to be reliable; they are also very common, so their evidence is likely to be easy to interpret. It will be sensible in the circumstances to take as a point of departure in establishing the chronology of the ninth century coinage of Northumbria the evidence the coins themselves provide and only then to consider the historical framework for them that documentary sources provide.

The coins fall broadly into two groups: coins of a silvery appearance in the names of King Eanred and Archbishop Eanbald and coins of a coppery appearance in the names of Kings Eanred, Æthelred, Redwulf, and Osberht, and Archbishops Wigmund and Wulfhere. From the entries in the *History of the Kings* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for the years before 806 and from an entry in the original ninth-century portion of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* for 867—entries on the accuracy of which it is possible to rely

without need of argument—it is known that Archbishop Eanbald belongs at the beginning of the period and that King Osberht belongs at the end of the period. This is enough to establish the order in which the coins of the various issuers after 806 should be put. It is uncontroversial that the order of the coins of the kings is: silvery coins of Eanred, coppery coins of Eanred, coppery coins of Æthelred, coppery coins of Redwulf, some more coppery coins of Æthelred, coppery coins of Osberht. It is uncontroversial also that the order of the coins of the archbishops is: silvery coins of Eanbald, coppery coins of Wigmund, coppery coins of Wulfhere. There are die-links to show the correctness of most of the steps in this arrangement and where there are not die-links there is satisfactory hoard evidence and moneyer evidence. Just as clear is the relation of the coins of the archbishops to the coins of the kings. The silvery coins of Eanbald are contemporary with the silvery coins of Eanred; the coppery coins of Wigmund are contemporary with the coppery coins of Eanred and the first group of coins of Æthelred; and the coppery coins of Wulfhere most resemble the second group of coins of Æthelred and the coins of Osberht. The evidence for this is set out by Lyon in his article already mentioned.

So the coins provide a list of kings that goes Eanred, Æthelred, Redwulf, Æthelred, Osberht and show that Eanbald was archbishop during the reign of Eanred; that Wigmund became archbishop while Eanred was still king and lived on into the reign of a king Æthelred; and that Wulfhere was archbishop round about the time Osberht became king. There is as it happens no continuity between the coins of Eanbald and Wigmund, and no continuity between the coins of Wigmund and Wulfhere; it would be possible for an archbishop for whom no coins are known to have intervened between Eanbald and Wigmund or between Wigmund and Wulfhere. In the list of the kings an additional ruler could only be added at either end, for from the start of the coppery coinage of Eanred down to the coinage of Osberht the coinage of the kings is unbroken. It would be honest to add that there is a candidate for a position at the beginning of the regnal list. In addition to the coins mentioned there occur in hoards deposited in the ninth century one or two silvery coins of a king Æthelred. They do not much resemble the coppery coins of Æthelred and in view of the fact that the issue of silvery coins seems to have ceased in the middle of the reign of Eanred the obvious thing to do with them is to ascribe them to another king Æthelred who might have been Eanred's immediate predecessor; but the *History of the Kings* and the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* show that before Eardwulf (796–806)—of whom incidentally no coins are known—there was a king Æthelred (790–6) to whom these coins might rather belong, and since not very many of them are known it is proper to reserve judgement on them for the moment.

We can now approach the documentary evidence with some idea of the chronological structure that it ought to present. The essentials of this evidence are set out in the tables on pp. 4 and 5. It will be seen that the order of events which it presents is not incompatible with that already established from the coins. In the period from 806 to 867 with which we are concerned two new kings, Ælfwald and Ælla, emerge, but they belong at the beginning and the end of the period and do not interrupt the succession of kings that has been worked out. The suggestion that there might have been a king Æthelred immediately before Eanred is not borne out, but this was only a suggestion. The information provided about Redwulf's brief usurpation explains why the coppery coins

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of Æthelred fall into two groups divided by those of Redwulf. As for the archbishops, it has already been noted that an archbishop who did not strike coins might intervene between Eanbald and Wigmund and Wulfsgie's appearance in this position is therefore quite credible.

Documentary Evidence for Kings of Northumbria

Left-hand column gives date of accession; centre column length of reign;
right-hand column fate of ruler concerned

Eardwulf	14 May 796 (ASC SD)	10 (SD)	deposed 806 (ASC SD) 808 (RW)
Ælfwald	806 (SD) 808 (RW)	2 (SD) 2 (RW)	died 808 (SD) 810 (RW)
Eanred	808 (SD) 810 (RW)	33 (SD) 32 (RW)	died 841 (SD) 840 (RW)
Æthelred	841 (SD) 840 (RW)	8 (SD) 7 (RW)	killed 849 (SD) 848 (RW)
Redwulf	844 (RW)	..	killed 844 (RW)
Osberht	849 (SD) 848 (RW)	13 (SD) 18 (RW)	deposed 862 (SD) 867 (ASC RW)
Ælla	862 (SD) 867 (ASC RW)	5 (SD)	killed 867 (ASC SD RW)
Ecgberht	867 (SD RW)	6 (SD RW)	died 873 (SD RW)
Ricsige	873 (SD RW)	3 (SD RW)	died 876 (SD RW)
Ecgberht	876 (SD RW)	not stated	not stated

Additional information given by ASC SD and RW:

1. Eanred was son of Eardwulf (SD RW).
2. Æthelred was son of Eanred (SD RW).
3. Æthelred was deposed in 844; Redwulf succeeded but shortly afterwards was killed in battle with 'pagani' (Vikings) at 'Ælviðtheia'; and Æthelred then recovered the throne (RW).
4. In 867 there was civil war in Northumbria. Osberht had been deposed in favour of a rival Ælla 'with no hereditary right', but retained some support. After the Viking capture of York Osberht and Ælla united their forces and attacked the Vikings there. They were defeated and both were killed (ASC).
5. Ecgberht was driven out of his kingdom in 872 (SD RW) and took refuge at the court of Burgred of Mercia (RW).

But it will be necessary to take a rather harder look at the documentary evidence than this. Study of it is rewarding. It should first be explained how these tables are made up. RW stands for Roger of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum*. As the title suggests this is a collection of extracts from a number of earlier historical works. These are arranged under the year to which the event mentioned in the extract belongs; which means that the information about Northumbrian history has to be picked out of a larger volume of material. Fortunately this is relatively easy¹ and it is possible to establish the nature of the document from which the extracts came. It was a register of events in Northumbria between 806 and 876—the information Roger gives about the death of Archbishop Wulfhere in 895 must come from another source—and a typical entry in it took the form '840. Eanred died and his son Æthelred succeeded him and reigned for seven years'. The entries apparently referred only to the succession of kings, archbishops, and bishops of Lindisfarne. The relevant information they contain can be set out in tabular form without difficulty.

¹ In *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042* (1955), p. 256 Prof. Dorothy Whitelock treats as coming from the same source as the information about Northumbria a note that in 848 there was an eclipse of the sun at the sixth hour of the day on the

1st of October. But there seems no real reason to suppose this; and in any case there was no eclipse on 1 October 848 or on any other 1st October in the ninth century (information from Royal Greenwich Observatory).

SD stands for Simeon of Durham. Here the position is complex. Three works attributed to Simeon of Durham contain information about Northumbria after 806: the *History of the Kings*, the *History of the Church of Durham*, and the *Letter on the Archbishops of York*. In the *History of the Kings* the information is set out quite clearly and

Documentary Evidence for Archbishops of York

Left-hand column gives date of consecration; centre column length of episcopate; right-hand column date of death

Eanbald	14 Aug. 796 (ASC SD)	not stated	not stated
Wulfsgie	not stated	not stated	831 (RW)
Wigmund	831 (RW)	16 (SD)*	854 (SD RW)
Wulfhere	854 (SD RW)	39 (SD)	892 (SD) 895 (RW)

* SD says that Wigmund died 'in the sixteenth year of his episcopate'. He does not say when the episcopate began, but presumably he thought that it began in 838. There seems to be no authority for the date 837 normally given for Wigmund's appointment.

There exist in addition two letters written to ninth-century archbishops of York. One is a letter from Bishop Ecgréd of Lindisfarne (whom SD dates 830–46) to Archbishop Wulfsgie. It is not dated and there is no indication in the text that might date it. The other is a letter from Lupus, Abbot of Ferrières (France), to Archbishop Wigmund. It is not dated, but it was certainly written in or after 849, and there is a case for saying that it was written in 851 at the same time as some other letters written by Lupus to English correspondents. Translations of them are printed by Whitelock, *English Historical Documents c. 500–1042* (1955), pp. 806–10.

is easy to evaluate. But unfortunately the *History of the Kings* covers only part of the period. It is a composite work by several hands¹ and the sections written by different writers do not dovetail into each other. One writer produced a narrative of Northumbrian affairs for the years 732–802 based on the chronicle that gave information about Northumbria up to 806. Information about Northumbria later in the ninth century comes in a different section of the work, produced by a historian writing at Durham in the twelfth century, the Simeon of Durham to whom the whole work has been attributed in error. As it happens his narrative—which is based mainly on the *Chronicon ex Chronicis* attributed to Florence of Worcester and only incidentally on a document with Northumbrian connotations—begins not in 802 or 806 but only with the birth of Ælfred of Wessex in 848/9. In consequence in the *History of the Kings* the first entry relating to Northumbria in the period from 806 onwards is an entry that covers the events of 854; events in Northumbria in 848 or 849 fall outside the section's scope because Simeon deals only with the birth of Ælfred in his entry for 848/9.

To fill the gap between the beginning of the ninth century and 854 it is necessary to turn to the *History of the Church of Durham* and the *Letter on the Archbishops of York*. These are by the same twelfth-century historian—Simeon—as the section of the *History of the Kings* that begins with the birth of Ælfred; and unlike his section of the *History of the Kings* they cover the entire ninth century. A study of them reveals that they contain a substantial body of information about Northumbria from 806 to 854 (and indeed from 854 onwards), and as it is of the same character as that in Simeon's section of the *History of the Kings* it is reasonable to suppose that Simeon possessed a document that gave information about Northumbria both before and after 854 and that if the information in all three works is added together this will shed light on the contents of that

¹ P. Hunter Blair, *Some Observations on the 'Historia Regum' Attributed to Symeon of Durham*, in *Celt and Saxon*, ed. Chadwick (1963), pp. 63–118, gives a clear account of this complex work.

document. Determining its exact nature is made difficult by the way in which he wrote the works on Durham and York. These works were primarily concerned with the history of those dioceses and the information they contain about kings of Northumbria is introduced mainly to date episcopal changes. Where the document used had two entries that read something like '841. Eanred died and was succeeded by his son Æthelred' and '846. Bishop Ecgreð of Lindisfarne died and Eanberht succeeded' Simeon runs them together to produce a sentence relevant to the history of Durham (or rather of Lindisfarne, in the ninth century the seat of the bishops later established at Durham) that reads 'In the sixteenth year of his episcopate, which was the fifth year of King Æthelred who had succeeded his father Eanred, Ecgreð died and Eanberht, elected in his place, governed the church for eight years.' But although this makes the wording of the document in the years before 854 difficult to establish it is quite easy to judge its content by reducing the factual information in all three works to tabular form. It emerges that it was a register of events in Northumbria between 806 and 876 dealing only with the succession of kings, archbishops, and bishops of Lindisfarne in which a typical entry indicated the death of a king or bishop, named his successor, and gave the length of that successor's tenure of office. The parallel with the document used by Roger of Wendover is striking.

From here it is an easy step to the conclusion that the document used by Simeon of Durham was in fact the same as the document used by Roger of Wendover. One argument is by itself decisive. Comparison of the entries in both writers for the period beginning 854 when Simeon reproduces his document in a full form shows that although the actual words in which they phrase these entries differ—not very surprisingly, for historians normally use their own turns of phrase when they incorporate in their works information set out by others—the structure of the entries is unmistakably the same.¹ It is impossible that this could be a coincidence. There are other indications that point the same way. Roger and Simeon may not agree on the dates of the events but they agree on their order; they agree about the way each king's reign came to an end, e.g. that Eanred died but that Æthelred was killed; and they agree in not giving the date when Archbishop Eanbald was succeeded by Wulfsig. Where there are differences between them it is usually possible to find an explanation of a comparatively simple nature. Some of them are differences caused by Simeon's rather confusing way of treating the material at his disposal. Others are differences that can be put down to careless copying of the entries in the original document; Roger and Simeon presumably worked from different copies of it and these might have suffered considerable alteration in the copying process. It is not necessary for present purposes to go into these differences in detail, but it should perhaps be indicated where one should believe Simeon and where one should believe Roger. Simeon seems to be right in putting the accession of King Ælfwald in 806 and that of King Eanred in 808; it can be seen from the reign length Roger gives Eanred that Roger's arithmetic is rather confused at this point. Roger seems to be right about the length of Osberht's reign and its relation to that of Ælla; I think that in the copy of the document Simeon used the length of Osberht's reign was by mistake given as thirteen years (XIII in Roman figures) rather than as eighteen years (XVIII in Roman figures) and Simeon decided at some stage to give Ælla a reign of five years to fill the gap. He only gives Ælla this reign of five years in his *History of the Church of Durham*;

¹ The entries in each writer for 872 and 873 show this best.

in his *History of the Kings* Ælla is not given a reign length. The disagreement between Simeon and Roger over the dates between which Æthelred was king is not easy to resolve. I should be inclined to adopt the dates given by Roger if it were not for the fact that he has a reign length for Æthelred a year shorter than he should. Perhaps he has subtracted a year to allow for the insertion of Redwulf. But it is not important to decide on the point.

What is important is the identity of the document used by Roger with the document used by Simeon. The relation between the information given by Roger and that given by Simeon has not been reviewed before and historians have tended in the past to assume that the reason why they broadly agree is because the information they give is broadly correct. Now that it is recognized that they agree because they make use of copies of the same document it is no longer necessarily the case that the information given is correct. Their agreement establishes only what the entries in the document used were; it does not establish the accuracy of these entries. This is a discovery that is vital for the study of the coinage. It has been noted that the order of kings and archbishops set out by Roger and Simeon is compatible with that indicated by the coins. Obviously Roger and Simeon had access to information about Northumbria that was comparatively reliable. The question is: how reliable is this information? As long as it was thought that Roger of Wendover's *Flores Historiarum* provided independent corroboration of the information given by Simeon it was reasonable to suppose that the information given was not just comparatively reliable but almost completely reliable. In consequence, where the evidence of the coins was difficult to reconcile with that presented by Roger and Simeon we had to master our natural inclinations and fit the coins by hook or by crook into the framework Roger and Simeon offer. This is not in the new situation obligatory. Close attention must still be paid to the scheme Roger and Simeon present but its authority will not be compelling. Where the coins and it are in apparent disagreement it will be necessary to weigh the evidence of both with equal care.

One's doubts about the relation of the coins to this scheme follow from some conclusions reached by Lyon. In trying to sort out the confusion in which the coinage had been left by numismatists of an earlier generation he concentrated on the two reigns of Æthelred and on the reign of Redwulf and produced an admirable scheme for dividing Æthelred's coins between his two reigns. He gave less attention to the coins of Eanred and Osberht but one of his lines of approach was important. He showed that it was possible to calculate the duration of the coppery coinages of Eanred and Osberht by comparing the number of dies used in their production with the number of dies used in the two reigns of Æthelred and that of Redwulf; the comparison is reasonable because the rate at which dies were used seems to have been much the same at any one time under any of these kings. Given that the coinages of Æthelred and Redwulf covered a period of eight years one can calculate that the coppery coinage of Eanred lasted for about five years and that the coinage of Osberht lasted for two or three years. On the chronology set out in the tables this will mean that Eanred's coppery coinage began about 835—it die-links into that of Æthelred—and that Osberht's coinage—which die-links into the other end of Æthelred's coinage—stopped about 851. The first of these calculations is interesting, in that it suggests that a major portion of Eanred's coinage belongs to the end of his reign and therefore that his coinage may not have started as early as 808. The second is devastating. The traditional assumption has been that the

Northumbrian coinage came to an end on the fall of York in 867. Here we have the coinage of Osberht, the last king for whom coins are known, coming to an end just after 850, although he was certainly king in the 860s and was still alive in 867. Confronted by this situation Lyon was forced to conclude that the striking of coin in Northumbria stopped some fifteen years before the fall of York; it may not have stopped exactly in 851, for there exists a small group of imitative and barbarous coins apparently later than those of Osberht the striking of which may have continued for a year or two, but it was certainly over by 855. Lyon invited historians to find some political or economic explanation of this curious state of affairs.

The calculation had another unpleasant consequence. If the issue of coins by the kings of Northumbria came to an end in 851 the coins of Archbishop Wulfhere (consecrated 854) are left very much out on a limb. It does not seem likely that the archbishop could have coined two or three years after the royal mint had closed for good. Lyon decided that Wulfhere must have become archbishop not in 854 but a few years earlier. He found a die-link connecting a coin of Archbishop Wulfhere with a coin of the second reign of Æthelred as well as with coins of Osberht and this encouraged him to put Wulfhere's consecration about 849 and to treat the date of 854 given for it by Simeon and Roger as a copyist's error. The style of the coins of Wulfhere is slightly superior to that of the coins of Osberht and this was another factor in putting them as near as possible to those of Æthelred. There are unfortunately difficulties in the way of this neat solution. The date 854 is agreed on by Simeon and Roger: can it be altered unilaterally without disturbing all the other dates given by them? Moreover, moving Wulfhere's consecration from 854 back to 849 will have its effect on the dates of his predecessor Wigmund: should we follow Simeon and calculate a period of sixteen years for Wigmund's episcopate backwards from 849? Should we leave Wigmund's consecration around 838 and shorten the length of his episcopate? Or should we follow Roger and reject Simeon's evidence altogether? There is also the serious difficulty presented by the letter of Abbot Lupus. It is addressed to Archbishop Wigmund, not to Archbishop Wulfhere; it could not possibly have been written earlier than 849; a reference in it to 'the grace of peace . . . now beginning' suggests that it was written after a great Viking raid in 850 that devastated northern France and south-eastern England; and in fact it may have been written in 851. Lyon's line of argument seems to raise as many difficulties as it solves. Still, this difficulty should not be allowed to get out of proportion. Some solution of the same general character as that proposed by Lyon might work—we could for instance leave Wulfhere where he is and move Osberht's accession a year or two later—and while there is this possibility there is no cause to look further. This is not a difficulty that demands an elaborate rethinking of the evidence of the coins or a general reappraisal of the dates given by Roger and Simeon.

The real doubts about the situation arise from Lyon's main conclusion: his conclusion that the Northumbrian coinage came to an end in the 850s. This is a conclusion that has been generally accepted by numismatists and has not caused historians any disquiet but the conclusion is still one which it is hard to accept. The coinage concerned was not replaced. It is very difficult to see what circumstances could have brought to an end before 867 the striking of coins in an area in which finds show that coin had been the general medium of exchange. It is true that it is not impossible to find an explanation if an explanation has to be found. There are two possibilities. It is possible that by 850

the capacity of the kings of Northumbria to exercise effective political control over their kingdom had so far diminished that Northumbria was in a permanent state of civil war which discouraged the striking and use of coin. Alternatively, the kings may not any longer have been able to maintain public confidence in the coins they issued; the silver content of these had fallen in the course of the ninth century from something like 60 per cent to something under 5 per cent, and to judge from the vast numbers of coppery coins that survive the purchasing power of the individual coin was by the reign of Osberht excessively small. But neither explanation is altogether satisfactory. It would be very much easier if a way could be found of bringing the coinage of Northumbria to an end in 867.

With the chronology as it stands this is impossible. Any scheme for prolonging the issue of the Northumbrian coinage up to 867 will involve moving the issue of Osberht's coinage from the three years 848–51 to a three-year period nearer 867; and this cannot be done so long as the date of Osberht's accession remains in 848 or 849, for there are die-links between coins of Osberht and coins of the second reign of Æthelred which show that Osberht's coinage began at the moment he became king. So if we really want a Northumbrian coinage in the 860s it will be necessary to throw over the chronology of Roger and Simeon and say that Æthelred died and Osberht became king not in 848 or 849 but at some point in the 860s, say 862 to allow his coinage to end *c.* 865 and the period from 865 to 867 to be occupied by the barbarous and imitative issue mentioned earlier which although barbarous was struck at the mint of York. The havoc that this will create will be considerable. It will be necessary to move forward some of the earlier dates by much the same amount, for if they are left where they are Æthelred would have a second reign of eighteen years and apparently only four years coinage to fill it. A tentative scheme of dating based on the apparent durations of the coinages of the kings concerned¹ would put Æthelred's second reign in 858–62; Redwulf in 858; Æthelred's first reign in 854–58; and Eanred in the period up to 854. Note that although the duration of Eanred's coppery coinage is calculable as five years the duration of his coinage as a whole is not known;² so it would be equally possible to leave his date of accession as 808 or to move it forward. If it is moved forward by the same amount as the other dates he would come to the throne in about 821.

Now this may seem a rash proposal. No evidence has so far emerged that justifies such treatment of the chronology set out by Roger and Simeon and a feeling of unease about bringing the coinage to an end just after 850 does not by itself entitle one to fly in the face of apparently sound historical fact. Nevertheless, it will emerge that this is a scheme of dating that both can and should be adopted. There is a volume of evidence, much of it of a substantial kind, to show that coins were struck in Northumbria in the 860s and that the kings for whom they were struck reigned at times other than those assigned them by Roger and Simeon. And if this is clearly the case it would be ridiculous to allow Roger and Simeon's chronology to stand in the way; it has already been shown that they are confused to a greater or less degree over the relative dates of Osberht and

¹ These exact durations are calculated on the assumption that the reign lengths Roger and Simeon assign to the reigns of Æthelred and Redwulf are correct. If these reign lengths are not correct the durations given may not be absolutely accurate, but they must be fairly accurate, for the make-up of

the coinages demands durations of a very limited length.

² The length of Eanred's silvery coinage is difficult to calculate, for it is not tightly die-linked; and it is also difficult to make out whether the coppery coinage succeeded it immediately or only after a period of time.

Archbishop Wulfhere and it has also been established that Roger does not in any real sense corroborate Simeon or vice versa.

In presenting a case for this revised chronology we can begin with the hoard evidence. With the exception of the great Hexham find of 1833, which was deposited at the beginning of Æthelred's second reign, all known hoards of ninth-century Northumbrian coins end with coins of Osberht. The most important of these are the Ripon (1695) find; the Kirkoswald, Cumberland (1808) find; a find made in St. Leonard's Place, York, within a stone's throw of York Minster, in 1842; a hoard found beside the banks of the River Wharfe at Bolton Percy, between York and Tadcaster, two-thirds of which came to light in 1846 and another third in 1967; and a small find made at Talnotrie in Galloway in 1912. The last is important because it is the only one to contain non-Northumbrian coins by which the Northumbrian coins can be dated. It comprised half a dozen coins of Northumbria—of Æthelred II, Redwulf, Osberht, and Wulfhere—four pennies of Burgred of Mercia, two Abbasid dirhems, and one *XPISTIANA RELIGIO* denier in the name of Louis the Pious. The four coins of Burgred were struck between 868 and 870, so the deposit of the hoard can be put in the bracket 870–5. It is a shock to find as the largest element in a hoard deposited this late a group of Northumbrian coins the issue of which on the existing chronology had stopped around 854. One explanation for their presence would be that the amasser of the hoard was indifferent to their use as currency and had retained them for this long period of time for their value in barter transactions, but since all the coins involved are of the coppery series and have therefore little intrinsic value this is not probable. Given that the hoard is an archaeological unity its composition indicates either that such coins continued to be used as currency long after the striking of them had stopped or that they had been struck rather nearer the period 870–5 than the existing chronology allows. I have no doubt which of these alternatives is preferable. It is not inherently likely that the coins of the Northumbrian kings continued to circulate after the striking of coin had stopped; and in any case such a state of affairs is not compatible with the structure of such hoards as have been discovered. If circulation continued the coins of which the greatest number had been struck—the coppery coins of Eanred and Æthelred—might be expected to become increasingly predominant in hoards as the advantage of being recently struck possessed by the coins of Osberht became with the passing of time less important. This is not the case. All the hoards are of a structure such that the coins of Osberht and Archbishop Wulfhere and the barbarous issues contemporary to these are much more numerous than they should be if the volume of coin struck was an important factor influencing the relative number of coins of each issuer present. It follows that all were deposited either when striking stopped or very shortly afterwards and that circulation did not continue. So the most rational explanation for the composition of the Talnotrie hoard is that the Northumbrian coins it contains were struck at a period later than they are presently dated and this will involve moving the date of Osberht's accession later than 849.

This rather tenuous evidence—the Talnotrie hoard is very small and its interpretation controversial—can be fortified by considering the hoard evidence as a whole. The other hoards may not contain any extraneous material by which they can be dated, but the fact of their existence is important. A break in the coinage does not automatically involve the deposit of hoards. The metallic content in coins makes them useful after they cease to circulate even if they have no intrinsic value, for they can be melted down and

employed for some different purpose; and in a country like England where supplies of metal are hard to come by one would expect that holders of substantial quantities of coin would do just this. In this instance, however, hoards were deposited. Why? The distribution of finds shows that all over Northumbria both in communities like York and Ripon and in remote upland districts people made no effort to convert their stocks of coin to any practical use but instead more or less immediately after the cessation of striking hid them in the earth. This very much suggests that the issue of coin was interrupted not by some administrative breakdown but by some violent disturbance. And once the deposit of these hoards is put down to some such event it would be perverse to dissociate their deposit from the Viking invasion of 867. A separate, earlier disturbance might account for the intermission of striking, but it would not account for the simultaneous deposit of these hoards, and their number, too, suggests that the disturbance was not an ordinary civil commotion but something which permanently prevented people recovering their valuables and beating them into swords and ploughshares. A Viking invasion fits the bill. Combining the date of 867 for the deposit of these hoards with the conclusion already reached that the hoards were deposited more or less when the striking of coinage ceased we must conclude that Osberht's coinage was being struck until 867 or shortly before 867.

My other arguments are less theoretical. There are certain obvious attractions in moving Osberht's coinage from the end of the 840s to the 860s. It might be thought that the necessity it creates of moving the dates of his immediate predecessors and the doubt it casts on other dates as far back as 806 are arguments for not moving Osberht. Anything for a quiet life. But curiously enough it is one of the attractions of moving the date of Osberht that it allows the earlier dates to be moved. There are two pieces of evidence about Northumbria earlier in the ninth century, one documentary, the other numismatic, that do not easily fit in with the chronology presented by Roger and Simeon; and while the chronology of Roger and Simeon is accepted it is not possible to give any credible explanation of them. It so happens that moving the date of Osberht forward is exactly what is wanted to solve the problems involved. The documentary evidence—which has not been mentioned above—is a passage in a chronicle compiled on the continent of Europe called the *Annals of the Frankish Kingdom*. It records that at the end of the year 808 King Eardwulf—who had been living at the court of Charlemagne since March that year—returned to Northumbria and recovered his throne. It does not say what happened to him thereafter, but he was evidently still alive the following year because envoys from the Pope and Emperor who had accompanied him to Northumbria in 808 brought no news about his death when they returned to the Continent in 809. The chronology given by Roger and Simeon, which has Ælfwald (806–8) immediately succeeded by Eanred (808–41), cannot accommodate a second reign for Eardwulf. A revised chronology, in which Eanred need not necessarily have come to the throne in 808 and might not have become king until 821 or even later, can accommodate both a second reign for Eardwulf and, if thought necessary, a reign for the king Æthelred whose existence was postulated because of the presence of silvery coins carrying the name Æthelred in ninth-century Northumbrian hoards.

The numismatic problem that a revised chronology resolves is one of the classic problems of Anglo-Saxon numismatics. A coin of a king Eanred formed part of a large hoard of ninth-century coins found in 1774 at Trewhiddle, near St. Austell, Cornwall.

It was a silver penny, carrying on the obverse a bust with the inscription EANRED REX and on the reverse a cross design with the inscription THES MONETA. When discussing the Trewhiddle find in *Archaeologia*, xcvi (1961) Mr. C. E. Blunt convincingly demonstrated that the coin involved was not struck earlier than 850—its obverse design is copied from pennies of Æthelwulf of Wessex the issue of which began only in or after 850—and he concluded that it was therefore not a coin of Eanred of Northumbria, since Eanred had died (it was assumed) in 841. This left him in rather a difficult position because no other king Eanred was known. The best that he could do was to repeat a suggestion by the nineteenth-century numismatist Edward Hawkins that the coin was struck by a 'neighbour and contemporary' of Kings Berhtwulf and Burgred of Mercia, ruling c. 850 somewhere south of the Humber, possibly in the Midlands. This is, however, hardly credible. It has become clear since Hawkins's day that in the period 850–70 there is nowhere south of the Humber where a king Eanred unknown to history could have reigned. He was not a king of East Anglia, Mercia, or Wessex, for the succession of kings in each of these kingdoms is now established; and by the 850s there were no other independent kingdoms in the area. The possibility that he was briefly king in some part of England remote from the attention of a contemporary historian, e.g. the West Midlands or Lindsey, is more or less ruled out by the evidence of charters which show that the authority of the kings of Mercia was throughout the period unchallenged in Midland England. The only way of escaping from the impasse thus created is to adopt a chronology that will allow Eanred of Northumbria to be still alive after 850. The new chronology does exactly this.

A revised chronology would allow the solution of other problems also. The dating of the archiepiscopal coinage can now be brought into line with that of the coinage of the kings. The rejection of the old chronology enables the beginning of Archbishop Wulfhere's coinage to be put where it fits best numismatically—at the time of Osberht's accession, now to be dated c. 862—without worrying much about the effect on the dating of earlier archbishops. For their dating we are now bound only by the letter of Abbot Lupus, which shows that Wigmund was alive within a year or so of 850, and by the evidence of the coins which shows that Wigmund's coinage began more or less when the coppery coinage of Eanred began—five years before Eanred's death—and stopped at the end of the first reign of Æthelred. On the new chronology this will mean that he was archbishop at least between 849 and 858; there is no archiepiscopal coinage for the reign of Redwulf or for most of the second reign of Æthelred, so it remains an open question whether Wigmund, Wulfhere, or someone else was archbishop between 858 and 862. In the period before 849 the chronology of the archbishops is more uncertain, but here again the revision of the chronology helps. Two archbishops are recorded for the period between 796 and the moment Wigmund became archbishop: Eanbald and Wulfsige. For Wulfsige we have no coins. For Eanbald we have quite a number. Most of these are silvery coins with obverse legend EANBALD AREP or similar and on the reverse the moneyers' names Eadwulf or Ethelweard; they are clearly parallel to the silvery coins of Eanred and their dating will depend on his dates. But there are a few of rather better silver that carry on one side EANBALD without title and on the other side ÆTHILRED without title; the ÆTHILRED side would appear to be the obverse and this indicates, one would imagine, that they were struck in the reign of a king of that name. Under the chronology of Roger and Simeon this would mean either that they were struck for an

earlier Archbishop Eanbald under Æthelred I (790–6) or that they were struck under the Æthelred whom Roger and Simeon put after Eanred; Eanbald in the latter case would presumably be a moneyer. They suit neither position very well. By the reign of the later Æthelred the striking of silvery coins had ceased; while to put them at the end of the eighth century would divorce them from the coins of the ninth century which they resemble in style and fabric and put them alongside coins of Æthelred by the moneyer Cuthgils (certainly to be assigned to this eighth-century Æthelred) to which they bear no resemblance at all. The difficulty is neatly met by their having been struck in the reign of the king Æthelred whom on a revised chronology we can insert before Eanred. ÆTHILRED on the obverse will refer to the king, EANBALD on the reverse to the archbishop. Precisely what date this puts the coins at is not clear. The silvery coins of Æthelred found in hoards deposited in the ninth century—struck by the three moneyers Ceolbald, Cuthhard, and Tidwulf—do not appear a very homogeneous series, so their issue may be spread over a period of time. The coins in the names of Æthelred and Eanbald most resemble those of the moneyer Ceolbald; and it would be satisfying to date these in the 820s, identifying Ceolbald as the London moneyer of this name who ceases to coin for the Mercian kings after about 823.¹ There are stylistic echoes of Mercian types on the coins involved and one that was at the beginning of this century in the collection of Major A. B. Creeke² carried a cross-crosslet design particularly similar to a Mercian type of the 820s struck by Ceolbald at the London mint. But this is a side issue. The important point is that the interpretation of the Æthelred/Eanbald coins is easiest on a revised chronology.

Again, a revision of the dates provides the most acceptable explanation for the problem presented by the existence of barbarous and imitative coins which die-links show were struck by the personnel of the mint of York after the issue of coins of Osberht. They do not consciously carry a king's name, so their issue is an unofficial one. On the view that Osberht's coinage stopped about 851 it is hard to account for them; for although Osberht may have lacked authority in Northumbria as a whole there is no evidence that his authority was disregarded in York and one would expect that he would have been able to control the operations of his mint. On the other hand, if the issue of the Northumbrian coinage is prolonged up to 867 they fit very well into the period after Osberht's deposition and before the utter collapse of the Northumbrian kingdom; there are no coins of Ælla and in a civil war between Osberht and Ælla an anonymous issue would be wise and its barbarous nature forced by the pressures of war.

What view will be taken of these arguments I do not know. I anticipate one particular objection. The treatment proposed for the chronology of Roger and Simeon hardly squares with the earlier conclusion that they had access to a document with 'comparatively reliable' information about Northumbria. My answer to this would be that I agree that theirs was a document with a core of correct information about Northumbria. After all, it gets the order of the kings from Eanred to Osberht right; it assigns

¹ In this case Eanred's date of accession would have to be put later than 823. He might even not have become king until after the Northumbrian submission to Ecgbert of Wessex recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* under 829. It may be significant that when

the *Chronicle* describes Ecgbert as receiving submission and peace from the Northumbrians it speaks of 'Northumbrians' and not of a king of Northumbria.

² *BNJ* i(1904), pl. ii, No. 40.

lengths to the two reigns of Æthelred and the reign of Redwulf that the known volume of coinage for them suggests are correct; the details it gives about the reign of Redwulf are convincing; and the passage in the *Annals of the Frankish Kingdom* confirms that the reign of Ælfwald ended in 808, even if it shows that he was not succeeded by Eanred. But however sound details in it may be I do not see that its broad chronological scheme is binding. There is no support in any quarter for any of the dates it gives for events after 808 and a good deal of evidence that these dates are wrong. Moreover, the document certainly leaves out a second reign for Eardwulf and probably the reign of a king Æthelred. Why it should be at the same time so right and yet so wrong it is difficult to make out; but it should not be impossible to find an explanation. One possible explanation would be this. In the course of transmission from the ninth century to the time of Simeon and Roger a section in the document covering the years immediately after 808 got lost or damaged and to fill the gap this left an enterprising scholar, hoping to tidy the chronology up, brought back the beginning of Eanred's reign from its true date to 808; and in consequence had to move back all subsequent dates to prevent Eanred's reign becoming impossibly long. In such an operation he might retain the details the document gave of the length of the reign of Æthelred and the position of the reign of Redwulf in it; but he would not be able to retain the reign length it gave for Osberht, for although the beginning of Osberht's reign might be moved back readily enough the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and related historical works showed decisively that its end could not be moved from 867. This would account for Æthelred's reign length being correct and the reign lengths on either side being incorrect.

It is proper to conclude by considering some of the consequences of adopting the proposed chronology or a similar chronology. Redating the coins will have a considerable effect on attitudes to the coinage and economy of Northumbria in the period under discussion. Under a new chronology the salient dates in the history of the coinage will be a date probably in the 820s when the issue of a silvery coinage began; a date at the end of the 840s when the coinage was considerably debased; and a date in the 860s when the coinage came to an end. Peaks in the production of coin will be a period in the late 830s and early 840s when the bulk of Eanred's silvery coinage seems to have been struck and the period of just under ten years (849–58) from the introduction of the coppery coinage to the end of the reign of Redwulf.¹ It will be necessary in the light of these and other considerations to take a fresh look at the relation of the Northumbrian coinage to contemporary coinages struck outside Northumbria. Dating it this much later will make its various phases contemporary with phases in the history of the coinage of England south of the Humber quite different from those with which its phases previously seemed contemporary; and attention will have to be given to the relation between changes in monetary policy in Northumbria and changes further south. It will also be necessary to examine in detail the significance of the penny of Eanred discussed above—which on the new chronology will have been struck shortly after the change in Northumbria from a silvery coinage to a coppery coinage—and of a celebrated gold coin which carries the name of Archbishop Wigmund (c. 849–c. 858 on a new chronology) but closely follows

¹ For a time before the introduction of the coppery coinage and again after the death of Redwulf the number of moneyers operating and the quantity of

coin produced fell sharply. Production rose again during the second reign of Æthelred (c. 858–c. 862) but it did not reach pre-858 levels.

the type and weight of solidi struck on the European continent very early in the reign of Louis the Pious (811–40).¹

Redating the kings will also have its effect. Transferring the events Simeon and Roger place in the 840s to the late 850s and early 860s will mean that the last years of Northumbrian independence before 867 will be occupied not by the long and featureless reign of a single king but by a series of short reigns ended by deposition, murder, and death. These would have undermined the strength of Northumbrian institutions and made the kingdom a target for intervention from outside. Transferring the fight at 'Ælvithea' from 844 to the late 850s also offers fresh perspectives. It brings Vikings into contact with Northumbria not long before their decisive intervention in 867; and it is tempting to take this evidence of contact as some sort of support for finding a historical basis for the largely mythical story of Ragnar Lothbrok, the Viking chieftain whose death at the hands of a Northumbrian king some time before 867 is said to have been the immediate cause of the invasion in that year. In any case it will be necessary to think again about the motivation of the invasion of 867. If Northumbria was a kingdom with which Vikings had been recently involved and a kingdom of which they well knew the political weakness the Viking decision to invade Northumbria in force in 867 may have been a much more deliberate act of policy than has sometimes been supposed.

¹ *BMC* 718 ex Pembroke sale (1848), lot 34. The coin is unique and can be traced back to the collection of Thomas Herbert, 8th Earl of Pembroke (1656–1733).