

# A Case for Ecclesiastical Minting of Anglo-Viking Coins

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## **Introduction**

In the 860's, the first of at least three Great Viking Armies arrived on the shores of Anglo-Saxon England. Over the next decade these armies overran most of the island, settling their conquered lands and bringing with them their own laws and customs that would later cause the area they settled to be called the Danelaw. One custom they did not bring with them was the habit of using coins for economic transactions; Scandinavia and other Viking-settled areas used bullion, not coins, as a medium of exchange. Surprisingly, however, strong systems of currency quickly developed in the Danelaw, climaxing in the long-lasting anonymous series of St. Edmund Memorial coinage in the south and St. Peter coinage in the north.

The iconography of these Anglo-Viking coins, as well as their very existence, raises many questions about their historical meaning. Why were Vikings minting coins in England when they were not minting coins anywhere else? Why is the design of these coins overtly Christian when the Vikings were pagan? Why are the longest lasting issues, those of St. Edmund and St. Peter, anonymous? Are they evidence that Viking rulers wanted to project themselves as kings in the Anglo-Saxon mold? That they had become Christian? Given the importance coins have as a source of historical information on early medieval England, finding the answers to these questions is crucial to our understanding of the early Danelaw.

Many of these questions are immediately resolved if one takes the view that Anglo-Viking coins were issued by churches and not by Viking rulers. In this scenario, Vikings showed no more interest in minting in England than they do elsewhere, the designs of the coins cannot be taken as evidence of a sudden transformation in Viking ideas about rulership, and the St. Edmund Memorial coins and the St. Peter coins were named with the ecclesiastical authority backing them and thus not anonymous. While this theory has been proposed in the literature, more effort has been

expended countering it in favor of one that entails royal minting by Viking kings. Nevertheless, ecclesiastical minting of Anglo-Viking issues is a strong theory that in many respects is better than royal minting; it simply has not been thoroughly considered in the literature. In this thesis, I seek to remedy this oversight by making a detailed argument for why royal minting does not sufficiently explain these coins and how ecclesiastical minting does.

### **Background: Coinage in Pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon England**

Anglo-Viking coinage did not develop in a vacuum; it was preceded by a complex coinage system that existed in England before the Viking settlement.<sup>1</sup> As there is no mention of coinage in early or middle Anglo-Saxon texts, information about coins and minting in England before and during Viking settlement is limited to what can be gleaned from the coins themselves and where they are found.<sup>2</sup> Coins can contain inscriptions naming the king, the moneyer, and/or the minting location, and in doing so they may indicate information such what titles a king claimed.<sup>3</sup> Coin hoards give a snapshot of what coins were circulating at a given place at the same time, which aids in the chronological assortment of coins and, along with single finds of coins, indicates which

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<sup>1</sup> Rory Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage, with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge*, 8. *Britain and Ireland c. 400-1066*, ed. E.M. Screen (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 8-9.

<sup>2</sup> Rory Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England: The Southern English Kingdoms, 757-865*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 47. For late-Anglo-Saxon texts, see: Christopher Blunt, Bernard Harold Ian Halley Stewart, and Colin Stewart Sinclair Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England from Edward the Elder to Edgar's Reform* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, publ. for the British Academy, 1989), 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 79-84.

coins were accepted in a particular region. The geographical range in which a coin issue is found can be used to infer the location of minting if no inscription of the coin gives this away. It is also possible to compare the designs of coins in detail to make further inferences about coins. For instance, if two coins share fully identical inscriptions on either the obverse or reverse side, then they must have been struck with the same obverse or reverse die; such a connection is called a die-link.

Minting served both a political and an economic purpose for medieval kings. Politically speaking, coinage was an excellent means of propaganda.<sup>4</sup> Having one's name on coins was a statement of authority. Naismith points out several ways that this purpose is apparent in Anglo-Saxon coins from the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early to mid 9<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>5</sup> For instance, the royal name minted on coins was quick to change following the ascension of a new king, the only East Anglian king who was known to mint coins during the height of Mercian hegemony was executed by the king of Mercia, and the paltry scale at which the earliest West Saxon coins were produced makes it plausible that they were minted for entirely political reasons and had little to no economic purpose.

However, in general coins also served an economic purpose: kings were able to extract revenue from minting. Mints profited by charging customers more weight in silver than it took to produce coins, and the king could take a slice of these profits. Such taxation could take several forms, from proportional fees per coin minted to charging moneyers for their dies to requiring coins be reissued at a lower weight standard and pocketing the surplus silver.<sup>6</sup> Naismith makes an

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<sup>4</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England* is an invaluable resource for studying the purpose of coins in pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon England.

<sup>5</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 117-118 & 129.

<sup>6</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 42-43.

attempt to estimate the income that could be generated by such minting by using the Domesday book, an England-wide property survey compiled in the late eleventh century at the orders of the Norman king William the Conqueror. While acknowledging that his estimation is fraught with difficulty, Naismith is nonetheless able to come to the rough, qualitative conclusion that minting profits would be a sizable quantity of money but small compared to other sources of revenue<sup>7</sup> (which consisted primarily of land-based rents and, to a lesser extent, tolls<sup>8</sup>).

In Anglo-Saxon England minting was not merely a royal prerogative; on certain coins minted in York and Canterbury the respective archbishop's name appears in place of the king's.<sup>9</sup> These ecclesiastical coins were issued in parallel to regal coins, and in general the two issues had different designs.<sup>10</sup> Ecclesiastical minting is also seen in London and perhaps in Rochester, albeit ephemerally. With a few interruptions, ecclesiastical minting continued in York until the 860s (*vide infra*) and in Canterbury until the early tenth century. Even after the churches ceased issuing

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<sup>7</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 44-45. Specifically, his estimate comes out to be that minting would raise 200-250 pounds a year, or 2.5%-3.1% of total royal revenue, based on the amount moneyers paid for new dies and secondary literature estimates for total income. Both these estimates are quite uncertain, although he cites later instances in England where a similar proportion of minting to total revenue can be reached with more certainty.

<sup>8</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 29-37.

<sup>9</sup> Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage, with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, I. The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th Centuries)* (Cambridge University Press, 1986), 173; Mark Blackburn, "Currency Under the Vikings. Part 1: Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages," *British Numismatic Journal* 75 (2005AD): 18-43; Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 121-123; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 139 & 153. For a more general discussion of exceptions to royal coinage in Anglo-Saxon England, see Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 117-127.

<sup>10</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 67-69.

their own named coins, law codes indicate that they may have been entitled to the profits of a certain number of moneyers.<sup>11</sup>

In making claims about what coins have to say about the history of Anglo-Saxon England, or any history for that matter, it is important to treat them like any other historical source.<sup>12</sup> That is, one cannot merely take what coins say at face value; it is critical to consider what the reasons were for stamping the words and icons appearing on coins and who was making these decisions.

Understanding Anglo-Saxon coins begins with the moneyer. They were the ones minting the coins and were thus ultimately responsible for the final form that the coins took.<sup>13</sup> However, that is not to say moneyers had full control over what they minted; they had to operate within the limits set by tradition and the issuing authority (i.e. the king or whoever he had delegated minting to), both of which could have the effect of standardizing coins produced by different moneyers.

Nonetheless, moneyers had a significant amount of leeway remaining in how they made the coins they produced. As Naismith puts it, “royal interaction with minting organization was generally towards maintenance rather than manipulation.”<sup>14</sup> Each coin design issued by an authority could have variations in how it was implemented, such as in the orthography of the king’s name or the artistic style of symbols.<sup>15</sup> The extent to which moneyers were operating under the constraints of, rather than the supervision of, the authorities is well illustrated by a period in the 820’s when moneyers at Canterbury ceased including the name of a ruling authority on the coins, presumably because the king, Ceolwulf I of Mercia, was having trouble exerting his authority in

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<sup>11</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 123.

<sup>12</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 111-112.

<sup>13</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 47-53.

<sup>14</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 142.

<sup>15</sup> See for example Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 49-51 & 74-75.

Kent (where Canterbury is located). Naismith points out that this demonstrates (a) the authority that moneyers had in their own right to mint coins and (b) the ability of moneyers to work as a group, since both the royal and ecclesiastical moneyers participated in this “strike.”<sup>16</sup>

South of the Humber multiple Anglo-Saxon kingdoms issued coins concurrently, but these separate issues functioned as one larger system. Each kingdom’s issue contained similar features: they were minted in silver, they followed King Offa of Mercia’s (r. 757-96) reformed weight standard of 1.3 grams, and they usually placed the king’s name on the obverse and the moneyer’s name on the reverse.<sup>17</sup> Geographically, coins from these issues are found interspersed throughout Southumbrian England, indicating that they circulated together.<sup>18</sup> The minting of these coins was not centralized in each city, as there are few die-links between Southumbrian moneyers, indicating that they worked separately.<sup>19</sup>

Northumbrian minting was completely separate and distinct from Southumbrian minting. Physically the coins were very different, being smaller and thicker and having undergone extensive debasement such that by the 860’s there was hardly any silver in them.<sup>20</sup> The minting was also organized differently; unlike in Southumbrian England there is a large number of die-links between coins of different moneyers in pre-Viking York, indicating that they worked very closely together,

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<sup>16</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 153-154.

<sup>17</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 270-271 & 300; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 149 & 385.

<sup>18</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 204; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 129.

<sup>19</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 132-133.

<sup>20</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 115; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 296 & 271.



perhaps even in the same building.<sup>21</sup> Southumbrian coins did not circulate in Northumbria, although Northumbrian coins seem to have served as small change in South of the Humber.<sup>22</sup>

Prior to the Viking settlement of England (*vide infra*) there were six centers of minting<sup>23</sup> – York in Northumbria, London in Mercia, Ipswich in East Anglia, Rochester and Canterbury in Kent, and either Southampton or Winchester in Wessex. After the Viking settlement, York, London, and Ipswich were controlled by Vikings. The West Saxon kings retained control of Rochester, Canterbury, and the mint in Wessex, and they shortly took control of London from the Vikings.<sup>24</sup> While production at the York mint ceased in the 860's, either as a result of Viking invasions or the civil war that preceded it,<sup>25</sup> minting continued in East Anglia and Mercia under puppet kings installed by the Vikings.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 133; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 114.

<sup>22</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 208; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 115.

<sup>23</sup> Naismith, *Money and Power in Anglo-Saxon England*, 128-129

<sup>24</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 305.

<sup>25</sup> Blackburn, "Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting," 127; Mark Blackburn, "Currency Under the Vikings. Part 2: The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw, c. 895-954," *British Numismatic Journal* 76 (2006): 204–26, here 205.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Blackburn, "Currency Under the Vikings. Part 1: Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages," *British Numismatic Journal* 75 (205AD): 18–43; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 168-170.

(A)



(B)



Figure 1. East Anglian (A) Serified A coin<sup>27</sup> and (B) Temple type coin.<sup>28</sup>

Two types of coins survive from this final decade of minting (the 870's) in East Anglia (see Figure 1).<sup>29</sup> One type is very similar to previous East Anglian issues, so much so in fact that it is on their witness alone that we know there were still kings in East Anglia after the Vikings killed the last one mentioned in written sources in 869 (*vide infra*). This type contains a serified A on the obverse and a cross with pellets on the reverse. The other type is a novel type not previously seen in East Anglian coinage, modelled on an Italian variant of a Frankish coin (the Carolingian Temple type) for the obverse design but maintaining the Anglo-Saxon placement of the king's and moneyer's names. The inscriptions on these coins are somewhat crude and illiterate (i.e., the writing is unintelligible, as if the die-cutter may not have known how to write and was merely copying symbols).

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<sup>27</sup> *Silver Coin*, n.d., 1838,0710.1032, AN390609001, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1092372&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1092372&partId=1). Changed background to white.

<sup>28</sup> *Coin*, n.d., SF-8D7091, Portable Antiquities Scheme, <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/571134>. Cropped out coin.

<sup>29</sup> Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages" comprehensively discusses this coinage; it is also included in Naismith's more general survey (Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 164).



Figure 2. Coins from Alfred's (A) London Monogram<sup>30</sup> and (B) Two-Line<sup>31</sup> issues.

The mid to late ninth century also saw important developments in West Saxon currency.<sup>32</sup> Most noticeably, King Alfred raised the weight standard to 1.6 grams, closer to the weight standard used on the continent than to the weight standard of Offa (which other Southumbrian English coinages were still using). This weight standard seems to have been introduced around the same time that a variety of coins containing mint-names located in Mercia (London, Gloucester, and Oxford; see for example the London Monogram type in Figure 2) were briefly issued. King Alfred also introduced the two-line type that would dominate the later years of his reign and West Saxon coinage of the tenth century.<sup>33</sup> This issue had the king's name on the obverse typically circumscribing a small cross and the moneyer's name on the reverse in two lines.

<sup>30</sup> *Silver Penny of Alfred the Great*, n.d., 1915,0507.798, AN31429001, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1092039&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1092039&partId=1). Changed background to white.

<sup>31</sup> N.d., Auction 146, Lot Number 228, CoinArchives, <https://www.coinarchives.com/w/lotviewer.php?LotID=3034878&AucID=3102&Lot=228&Val=260c7248109d191e99710ebf40fd608b>. Changed background to white.

<sup>32</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 167-173.

<sup>33</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 181.

## Background: Viking Settlement of England



Figure 3. Anglo-Saxon England in the ninth century.<sup>34</sup>

In 866, a Great Viking Army landed on the shores of East Anglia<sup>35</sup> (see Figure 3 for geographical references). Over the course of the next twelve years this army, likely with reinforcements from at least one additional army,<sup>36</sup> had conquered all the principle kingdoms of Anglo-Saxon England except Wessex. The kings of Northumbria and East Anglia were killed; the king of Mercia was driven into exile. Puppet kings were temporarily installed in their places as the Vikings moved on to fight other kingdoms, but in 876 the Vikings shared out the land of

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<sup>34</sup> “King Alfred the Great | Britroyals,” n.d., <https://www.britroyals.com/kings.asp?id=alfred>.

<sup>35</sup> Dorothy Whitelock, David Charles Douglas, and Susie I Tucker, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Revised Translation* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1986), 45-58, a. 865-899.

<sup>36</sup> Alfred P Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles, 850-880* (Oxford: University Press, 1977), 240-242. Smyth argues for the arrival of three separate armies in 865, 871, and 879; however, his sources are not explicit enough to allow for such a neat delineation.

Northumbria for themselves, doing likewise in the eastern part of Mercia in 877 and in East Anglia in 880. While the Vikings began to settle parts of Wessex in 878 after their third invasion had driven the West Saxon King Alfred into hiding in the swamps of Athelney, Viking settlement did not leave a significant mark here<sup>37</sup> as King Alfred managed to rally his forces and win a decisive victory against the Viking king Guthrum later that year. Guthrum was baptized and given the Anglo-Saxon name Athelstan. While Wessex continued to be at war with Viking and Anglo-Viking armies for the following decades its existence was never again threatened.

When the dust settled after this turbulent decade and a half, there were two spheres of Anglo-Saxon control left in England and three spheres of Viking control.<sup>38</sup> The dominant surviving Anglo-Saxon polity was Wessex. Western regions of Mercia also remained technically independent from Viking control but only under a puppet king of the Vikings' choosing.<sup>39</sup> In the following decade Wessex conquered these western regions of Mercia and southern portions of Viking controlled Mercia, including London, and put these territories in charge of an autonomous

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<sup>37</sup> C. R Hart, *The Danelaw* (London: Hambledon Press, 1992), 6-20 lays out clearly the areas where Viking settlement was significant, and areas south of the Thames are not included.

<sup>38</sup> Hart, *The Danelaw*, 3-20. While Hart divides the Danelaw into five pieces, his interests lie more in the lasting effect of the settlement than the political organization of the Danelaw and it is clear that he does not consider the 'Southern Danelaw' or the 'Outer Danelaw' to constitute their own political sphere.

<sup>39</sup> There is no mention of smaller Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, such as Kent and Sussex, in the descriptions of the Viking conquests in our principal source for this period of Anglo-Saxon history, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. The Chronicle's references to these territories in accounts of the later wars of the 880's and 890's imply that Wessex retained control of them (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 53-58, a. 891-896).

ruler.<sup>40</sup> Insofar as political divisions of Viking territory go, the three regions that were settled – Northumbria, Eastern Mercia, and East Anglia – formed their own political spheres, although the evidence suggests that Northumbria and/or East Anglia controlled the Eastern regions of Mercia,<sup>41</sup> which are generally referred to as the Five Boroughs after the Viking settlement (because by the early 940’s and perhaps as early as the initial Viking settlement it was organized as a confederation of five fortified cities<sup>42</sup>).

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<sup>40</sup> *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 52, a. 886.

<sup>41</sup> While describing the later wars between Wessex and the Vikings, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* always refers to Viking armies as coming from either Northumbria, East Anglia, or a third mobile group that never settled (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 51-62, a. 885-910). This pattern is broken in 913 as King Edmund begins to close in on the last Viking strongholds south of the Humber, but then only to discuss more specifically the locale in which an army was based, not to speak of a third broad area such as the Five Boroughs (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 62-63, a. 913). The sense that there were really two regions of Viking control rather than three is supported by Athelweard, a tenth century West Saxon chronicler who had access to a now-lost version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and possibly other sources; Athelweard notes that the Vikings divided England into two shares (J. A. Giles, trans., “The Chronicle of Fabius Ethelwerd, From the Beginning of the World to the Year of Our Lord 975,” in *Old English Chronicles : Including Ethelwerd’s Chronicle, Asser’s Life of Alfred, Geoffrey of Monmouth’s British History, Gildas, Nennius, Together with the Spurious Chronicle of Richard of Cirencester* [London : G. Bell, 1906], 1–40, <http://archive.org/details/oldenglishchroni00gileuoft>, 30, a. 875; as pointed out by Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, 242). All the same, as mints in the Five Boroughs were active before mints in York, produced different coins than were produced in East Anglia, and continued to produce coinage after the rest of Southumbrian England was conquered by Wessex (Blackburn, “The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw”, Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 301-303) it is likely that the Five Boroughs was functionally distinct from both Northumbria and East Anglia, even if it likely was nominally under their political control.

<sup>42</sup> Hart, *The Danelaw*, 16.

These Viking conquests had profound effects on the development of England that are still visible today in the myriad of English place-names of old-Norse origin.<sup>43</sup> The effect on local laws and customs was particularly prominent – eleventh and twelfth century legal codes refer to regions of heavy Viking settlement as following the law of the Danes, and for this reason these parts of England are known as the Danelaw.<sup>44</sup> While it is somewhat anachronistic to use this term to refer to the regions the Vikings settled at the end of the ninth century,<sup>45</sup> this is nonetheless common practice and I will therefore follow it here.

### **Anglo-Viking Coinages: The Question of Ecclesiastical Minting**

One custom that the Vikings undoubtedly brought with them was a preference for trading in bullion rather than in coin.<sup>46</sup> The Anglo-Saxons were unique among the peoples of the British Isles and Scandinavia in using coins; elsewhere, trade was solely done in barter or in bullion.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Hart, *The Danelaw*, 18.

<sup>44</sup> Hart, *The Danelaw*, 3.

<sup>45</sup> One could also say it is somewhat inaccurate, as areas the Vikings settled and effected local laws were not always under the control of Viking rulers.

<sup>46</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 18-19.

<sup>47</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 18-22; Brian Malmer, “South Scandinavian Coinage in the Ninth Century,” in *Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, ed. James Graham-Campbell and Gareth Williams (Left Coast Press, 2007), 13. This is with the single exception of coinage minted in southwestern Scandinavia near the Frankish border; however, this was very local in nature: elsewhere in Scandinavia, these coins are only found incorporated into jewelry, indicating that the population in general was not accustomed to coinage as coinage. Blackburn, “Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting,” 139; Malmer, “South Scandinavian Coinage in the Ninth Century,” 20-21.

Vikings in particular are known to have deposited hoards of bullion consisting of mixed metal, including coins, ingots, jewelry, and hacksilver in all of the regions in which they operated. Finds of this kind in the Danelaw provide strong evidence that the Vikings who settled there were no different.<sup>48</sup> This is reinforced by “peck-marks” commonly found on coins hoarded in the Danelaw, where a small indent is made on the coin in order to test the quality of its metal; such testing is characteristic of Viking hoards.<sup>49</sup> An important corollary of the fact that Vikings traded in bullion is that Viking notions of kingship did not include minting coins.<sup>50</sup>

Nevertheless, the Danelaw seems to be an exception to the rule that Vikings did not mint coins – by the turn of the tenth century, there was a strong system of currency in both Northumbria and East Anglia, with minting occurring in the Five Boroughs as well.<sup>51</sup> Determining the chronology of these coins has proved so challenging to the numismatic community that this matter has consumed most of the literature on them.<sup>52</sup> Even today, the literature on Anglo-Viking coins

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<sup>48</sup> Blackburn, “Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting,” 134-135; Mark Blackburn, “The coinage of Scandinavian York,” in R.A. Hall, et al. *Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York*. Vol. 8 (4). *Anglo-Scandinavian York* (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2004), 325-349, here 344-346; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 283-284; Jane Kershaw, “An Early Medieval Dual-Currency Economy: Bullion and Coin in the Danelaw,” *Antiquity* 91, no. 355 (February 2017): 173–90, doi:[10.15184/aqy.2016.249](https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2016.249).

<sup>49</sup> In fact, this particular method of testing coins is first observed in Danelaw hoards, which is often taken as an indication that it originated there (Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 20).

<sup>50</sup> Such a notion cannot exist in the absence of minting.

<sup>51</sup> Blackburn, “Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting,” 132-133; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 285. Minting in the Five Boroughs at times resembled a third system of its own (Blackburn, “The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw”).

<sup>52</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 281-283 is an excellent recent review of the relevant literature.



is focused mostly on placing them in a chronology or evaluating them in the context of the bullion economy the Vikings brought to England with them.<sup>53</sup> Consequently, relatively little attention has been given to what the coins have to say about the Anglo-Viking society in which they were issued, and the attention that has been given to such matters has not generated much controversy. The historical claims about these coins that have been made are generally interspersed in works detailing their chronology, and Anglo-Saxon historians commonly refer to coins in making non-numismatic theses.<sup>54</sup>

One aspect of Anglo-Viking coins that has generated some controversy is the question of what authority backed the minting of the issues that dominated this period, the so-called St. Edmund Memorial coinage and the so-called St. Peter coinage (*vide infra*). Some authors argue that these were ecclesiastical coins, especially for the St. Peter coins. For instance, Smyth takes the invocation of Saint Peter's name to mean that the church had taken full control of the York

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<sup>53</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 282.

<sup>54</sup> The greater political and cultural statements backed up with these coins usually revolve around notions of who held power and the extent with which Viking settlers were Christianized. For instance, Smyth uses early Anglo-Viking coins from Northumbria to establish the line of kings in Viking controlled York at the turn of the tenth century (Alfred P Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin: The History and Archaeology of 2 Related Viking Kingdoms*. (Dublin: Irish Acad. Press, 1987), I 47-53), and he uses the imitative coinage with Guthrum's baptismal name as evidence of his thorough assimilation into Christian society (Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles*, 254). Similarly, Naismith states that the St. Edmund's coinage is "a clear signal of the profound penetration of Christianity in Viking territory (Abrams 2001a), though it leaves the position of local rulers enigmatic" Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 284. While such statements are representative of what the literature has to say about these coins, they are usually based on surface-level attributes of these coins, such as whose name was on them and what the iconography was.

mint;<sup>55</sup> Rollason similarly argues more broadly that the church was a dominant power in York during this time and the invocation of Saint Peter's name reflects this.<sup>56</sup>

The more dominant view in the literature, however, is that these issues were not ecclesiastical issues. Blackburn was a strong proponent of this position,<sup>57</sup> arguing that the secular authorities would not have given up the prestige and profits of minting for such a long period of time. He reinforces this theory for Southumbrian England by arguing that the preceding so-called "imitative" phase of Anglo-Viking coinage (*vide infra*) was regal in nature because (a) the Temple type coinage in the name of Guthrum shows that royal minting continued after the Viking settlement of East Anglia and (b) the illiterate inscriptions, imitative nature, and presumed use of dies taken from a Frankish mint is consistent with the first issues of later coinages in the Viking world.<sup>58</sup> Stewart adheres to this view,<sup>59</sup> as does Naismith<sup>60</sup> who adds that work by Townsend undercuts Rollason's position that the church was a powerful player in York politics and that the sword on the later St. Peter coinage may well be a reference to secular authority and even possibly a pagan symbol.

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<sup>55</sup> Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, I 54-55.

<sup>56</sup> David Rollason, "Anglo-Scandinavian York: The Evidence of Historical Sources," in R.A. Hall, et al. *Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York*. Vol. 8 (4). Anglo-Scandinavian York (York: Council for British Archaeology, 2004), 305-324, here 313-314.

<sup>57</sup> Blackburn, "Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting," 135-136; Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 333; Blackburn, "The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw," 205.

<sup>58</sup> Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages."

<sup>59</sup> Ian Stewart, "Review Article: The Nelson Collection at Liverpool and Some York Questions," *British Numismatic Journal* 52 (1982): 247-51, here 249

<sup>60</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 298.

The principal argument against ecclesiastical minting in the Danelaw rests on the poor, unstated assumption that letting the church mint coins constituted an opportunity cost for the Viking leaders. However, this is not a fair assumption to make for Viking controlled England. As issuing coins was not part of the Viking notion of kingship, supposing that there was a loss of political prestige associated with letting the church mint coins would be to use circular logic, taking the potential significance of royal minting (that Viking rulers associated prestige with coinage) as evidence for its existence. One cannot even assume that the ecclesiastical minting meant that Viking rulers received none of the profits. The church's pockets may have been out of reach of the typical Anglo-Saxon ruler, but ever since their first raids on English monasteries at the close of the eighth century Vikings had proved quite adept at taking money from churches.<sup>61</sup> Thus, even if the church oversaw the minting of Anglo-Viking coinage it would not necessarily mean that Viking kings did not get a cut. A detailed look at Anglo-Viking coins will show that royal minting of most of these coins at the behest of Viking kings is unlikely, but that ecclesiastical minting is entirely plausible for most issues.

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<sup>61</sup> See for example the Viking raid on Lindisfarne (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 36, a. 793), the Viking raid on Ecgfrith's monastery (*The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, 36-37, a. 794), and the disappearance of monasteries during the Viking settlement (James Abrams, "The Conversion of the Danelaw," in *Vikings and the Danelaw: Select Papers from the Proceedings of the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21-30 August 1997*, ed. James Graham-Campbell et al. [Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2001], 31-44, here 34).



Figure 4. Anglo-Viking coins imitating West Saxon coins. (A) Two-line type,<sup>62</sup> (B) London Monogram type,<sup>63</sup> (C) Oxford Type,<sup>64</sup> (D) Canterbury type.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>62</sup> n.d., Auction 146, Lot Number 251, CoinArchives, <https://www.coinarchives.com/w/lotviewer.php?LotID=3034901&AucID=3102&Lot=251&Val=9f9132691843541bf9cd10725c8b5c16>.

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<sup>63</sup> *Silver Coin*, n.d., 1896,0404.60, AN361943001, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1069226&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1069226&partId=1).

<sup>64</sup> *Silver Coin*, n.d., 1838,0710.324, AN1612986218, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1069121&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1069121&partId=1). Changed background to white.

<sup>65</sup> *Silver Coin*, n.d., 1838,0710.376, AN1612986213, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1069467&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1069467&partId=1). Changed background to white.

## A Survey of Anglo-Viking Coins

The earliest phase of Anglo-Viking coinage is known as the “imitative phase.”<sup>66</sup> All minting in this phase occurred south of the Humber in the 880’s and 890’s, and, as the name implies it consists of coins whose designs were more or less copied from other coins, generally those of Wessex (see Figure 4). Imitative Anglo-Viking coins circulated in the Southumbrian Danelaw; West Saxon coins did not, although this could be due to either economic or political forces.<sup>67</sup> The most important hoards containing these coins are the Cuerdale (deposited c. 905), Ashton (deposited c. 895), and Stamford (deposited c. 890) hoards.<sup>68</sup> These coins maintain the weight standard of Offa rather than the heavier weight standard introduced by Alfred, and in general are less literate than and stylistically distinct from legitimate West Saxon coins. The majority imitate the generic two-line design of West Saxon coinage right down to the name of King Alfred and sometimes even the name of the moneyer; however, there is a sizable, motley group of exceptions to this general rule. For instance, in the early to mid 880’s imitations of the London Monogram type were issued, and in the mid 890’s imitations of the Oxford and Canterbury Types were issued, the former of which sometimes modifies the West Saxon design to include a cross-on-steps that is distinctive of the earliest Anglo-Viking coins of York (*vide infra*).

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<sup>66</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 313-319; Blackburn, “Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting,” 128-132; Blackburn, “Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages”; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 288-290 & 301-302.

<sup>67</sup> Blackburn, “Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting,” 130-131.

<sup>68</sup> Blackburn, “Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages,” 20.



Figure 5. Two-line imitative coin with Guthrum's baptismal name Athelstan replacing Alfred's name.<sup>69</sup>

Several imitative coins are worth special attention because they replace Alfred's name with the name of a local Viking ruler.<sup>70</sup> The most substantial collection of these are the 40-41 coins of the two-line type that have Athelstan as the king's name (see Figure 5), Athelstan being the baptismal name of the King Guthrum who submitted to the King Alfred in 878. Additionally, there are a small number imitative coins named for a King Guthfrith, a King Halfdan, and an Earl Sihtric, each with their own peculiarities. King Guthfrith was a contemporary king of York; however, it is much more likely that these coins are evidence that he exerted authority in part of the Five Boroughs rather than evidence that minting in York started prior to the mid 890's.<sup>71</sup> Nothing is known about King Halfdan or Earl Sihtric, except that the coins of Sihtric are named with the mint name *Sceldfor*. This likely transliterates to Shelford, but it is unknown if this is a Shelford in East Anglia or in the Five Boroughs.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Silver Coin*, n.d., 1838,0710.8, AN356360001, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1069035&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1069035&partId=1). Changed background to white.

<sup>70</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 289.

<sup>71</sup> Mark Blackburn, "The Ashdon (Essex) Hoard and the Currency of the Southern Danelaw in the Late Ninth Century," *British Numismatic Journal* 59 (1989): 13–38, here 19-20.

<sup>72</sup> Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages," 21.

In addition to the coins imitative of West Saxon coins, there are coins from this period that resemble the late East Anglian Temple coinage; most are illiterate, but a highly literate piece clearly contains the name Athelstan.<sup>73</sup> Two of these contain the mint name of Quentovic on the reverse. The design of this reverse is in a style so distinctive of die cutting at the Frankish trading settlement of Quentovic that it is highly likely that their reverse dies were cut there.<sup>74</sup> Blackburn uses these coins to argue that there was continuity of royal minting in East Anglia from pre-Viking times into the period of the Viking settlement.<sup>75</sup>



Figure 6. St. Edmund Memorial Coinage.<sup>76</sup>

Sometime in the mid to late 890's these issues imitative of West Saxon coins gave way to coins reminiscent of East Anglian coins from before the Viking invasions (see Figure 6). On these so-called St. Edmund Memorial coins, we find a serifed **A** circumscribed with "O St Edmund the

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<sup>73</sup> Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages," 25-26.

<sup>74</sup> One of these two coins has the designs of the two sides at a relative orientation off of a multiple of 90 degrees (Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages," 37) which indicates that the die was likely round, not square. This is characteristic of Northumbrian or Continental die-cutting (Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 338-339) and supports Blackburn's attribution of these dies to ones taken from Quentovic.

<sup>75</sup> Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages."

<sup>76</sup> *Silver Coin*, n.d., 1838,0710.572, AN356363001, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1068910&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1068910&partId=1). Changed background to white.

King” on the obverse and a reverse with the moneyer’s name circumscribing a cross.<sup>77</sup> A small number contain King Alfred’s name in place of the moneyer’s in a manner similar to that of West Saxon Canterbury type coins, possibly reflecting a transition from the imitative phase. Like the earlier imitative Anglo-Viking coins and the even earlier pre-Viking East Anglian coins, these coins were struck to the weight standard of Offa. This coinage was long lasting, beginning in the 890’s and likely continuing until Wessex conquered most of the southern Danelaw in the late 910’s. It is well represented in the Cuerdale hoard, so many issues exist from the first decade of its minting; later issues are known from smaller hoards and single finds and are thus much rarer. Based on this hoard evidence, it appears that the St. Edmund Memorial coinage did not circulate alongside earlier imitative coins.

As best as we can tell from the surviving evidence, there were three phases to the St. Edmund Memorial coinage.<sup>78</sup> The first phase is characterized by a high degree of literacy in the coins. They were initially minted by only five moneyers, although this number quickly grew. In the second phase, the literacy and the quality of the die-cutting decreased. This decline grew more pronounced in the third phase, in which the writing on most coins is unintelligible and the weight and the size of the metal disc from which the coins were struck (the flan) decreased.

Where exactly both of these Southumbrian Anglo-Viking coin types were minted is not entirely clear. The rare coin has a mint signature for Leicester, Lincoln, Shelford, or possibly Norwich, and both imitative coins and St. Edmund Memorial coins have been found in both the

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<sup>77</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 100-102; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 319-320; Blackburn, “Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting,” 132-134; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 290-292.

<sup>78</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 291-292.



Five Boroughs and East Anglia. It is generally thought that the St. Edmund Memorial coinage was first minted in East Anglia<sup>79</sup> and later spread to being minted in parts of the Five Boroughs as well, and that the later imitative coins were therefore minted in the Five Boroughs.<sup>80</sup>

In contrast to the situation in East Anglia, it is abundantly clear that for around 30 years after the Vikings first invaded Northumbria no coins were minted north of the Humber.<sup>81</sup> Around the same time that the St. Edmund Memorial coinage was introduced in the south, however, the mint of York opened again. It produced coins of size and weight typical of those from south of the Humber as opposed to following pre-Viking Northumbrian standards,<sup>82</sup>

The first type of Northumbrian Anglo-Viking coinage was minted in the name of one of four kings:<sup>83</sup> *Siefredus* (sometimes in the un-Latinized form *Sivert*), *Cnut*, *Alvaldus*, and *Airdecnut*<sup>84</sup> (see Figure 7). The first two of these represent the vast majority of the coins, the third

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<sup>79</sup> Blackburn, "Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting," 131 & 132; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 290-291.

<sup>80</sup> Blackburn, "Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting," 131. The influence of York on the Oxford type imitations and the inscription "NORDVICO," which may be a Norwich mint name, on a St. Edmund Memorial coin support such a theory.

<sup>81</sup> Blackburn, "Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting," 127; Blackburn, "The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw," 205.

<sup>82</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 292.

<sup>83</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 102-103; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 320-322; Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 329-322; Blackburn, "The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw," 205; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 292-295. The coin in the name of *Airdecnut* is a recent find and is thus only mentioned by the latest of these authors.

<sup>84</sup> *Alvaldus* and *Airdecnut* are not given the title of *rex* (king) on the coin, but that could be merely because they are long names (Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 329).

is rare, and the fourth is only known from one specimen. There are also a small number of coins containing religious inscriptions such as *Mirabilia Fecit* in place of the king's name.<sup>85</sup> The vast majority of these coins were found in the Cuerdale hoard; were it not for this hoard, they would be astonishingly rare. Correspondingly, caution must be taken when interpreting these coins because the selection found in the Cuerdale hoard are not necessarily representative of the whole series.<sup>86</sup> That the one *Airdecnut* specimen was not found in the Cuerdale hoard highlights this concern. Both the obverse and reverse of these issues are covered in Christian motifs, including a variety of crosses.<sup>87</sup> In both the iconography used and the Latin forms inscribed these coins seem to have been influenced by the continent; nevertheless, they are not mere imitations and also contain a substantial degree of innovation in their design.<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 103. The specific suggestion that only these are ecclesiastical issues (Stewart, "Nelson Collection," 248-249) will not be covered here, as the question addressed here is whether or not all of these coins are ecclesiastical, not whether the anonymity of a select few of these coins indicate they are ecclesiastical.

<sup>86</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 294. Instead, coins give a snapshot of what is circulating at a given moment.

<sup>87</sup> Certain coins of Cnut also enigmatically contain the work *Cunnetti* and certain coins of Sigeferth preface his name with a *C*; the meanings of these remain unknown (Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 293).

<sup>88</sup> Blackburn, "The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw," 205; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 295.

(A)



(B)



Figure 7. Anglo-Viking coins from Northumbria. (A) Coin in the name of King Siefred<sup>89</sup> (B) Swordless St. Peter.<sup>90</sup>

We know nothing for certain about any of these kings; the little that seems likely to be true about them comes from their identification in other sources. It is generally assumed that Siefredus is the same Siegfred who Athelweard refers to as a *piratus* from Northumbria that raided the coast of Wessex during the wars between Vikings and Alfred.<sup>91</sup> The identification of Cnut is far from clear; some have tried to equate him to Siefredus's likely antecessor Gufrith or to Siefredus himself, but only for lack of any other known king to identify him as; these suggestions have been generally refuted in the literature.<sup>92</sup> Smyth's suggestion that he is the same Cnut who appears in

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<sup>89</sup> n.d., Auction 146, Lot Number 253, CoinArchives, <https://www.coinarchives.com/w/lotviewer.php?LotID=3034903&AucID=3102&Lot=253&Val=4bea61fc9b9c01e7ae3f3045c9f8fdca>.

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<sup>90</sup> n.d., Auction 146, Lot Number 266, CoinArchives, <https://www.coinarchives.com/w/lotviewer.php?LotID=3034916&AucID=3102&Lot=266&Val=9fe40956597b38c5b165f6c0e38bdb96>.

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<sup>91</sup> Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, I 47; Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 102; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 321; Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 329; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 293.

<sup>92</sup> Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, I 47; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 321.

later Viking sagas<sup>93</sup> has received some support from scholars,<sup>94</sup> albeit largely due to a lack of any more plausible theories. *Alvaldus* may possibly represent Athelwold, the nephew of King Alfred who, according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, upon Alfred's death tried and failed to claim the throne of Wessex, fled to Northumbria, and was briefly accepted as king there.<sup>95</sup> The identity of *Airdecnut* is most enigmatic; this name could possibly be a blundered form of either *Cnut* or *Alvaldus*,<sup>96</sup> although such an assignment is reminiscent of the tendency of older literature to assign to *Cnut* just about any known Viking king of York from around this time.

This royally named coinage did not last long, and around 905 was replaced by an anonymous coinage with the name of St. Peter, the patron saint of the York minster<sup>97</sup> (see Figure 7). The typical design has on one side "Money of St. Peter" inscribed in Latin with a two-line pattern and on the other side a small cross circumscribed with the York mint signature. Stylistic similarities between a small number of early St. Peter coins and the earlier coinage of Siefred,

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<sup>93</sup> Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, 147-49

<sup>94</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 103; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 321; Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 329; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 293. Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon do not cite this as Smyth's theory and also mention an alternative theory that *Cnut* is the *Hun(e)deus* who raided France in 896 and was baptized in 897.

<sup>95</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 103; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 321; Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 329; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 293.

<sup>96</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 293.

<sup>97</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 103-105; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 322-323; Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 332-333; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage* 295-298.

Cnut, Alvadus, and Airdecnut indicate that these were successive issues,<sup>98</sup> with the scarcity of the earlier coinage outside of the Cuerdale hoard suggesting a transition between them c. 905.<sup>99</sup> St. Peter coinage lasted until 919, with the weight and literacy of coins declining in the middle of this period but being restored at the end of it. This restored coinage at times has the St. Peter inscription in one line or a *Karolus* monogram in place of the cross.

In 919 the Viking Kingdom of York was conquered by a fresh wave of Vikings and the St. Peter coinage was briefly interrupted by a coinage in the name of King Ragnald<sup>100</sup> (see Figure 8). Three variants of Ragnald's coins exist. One contains a *Karolus* monogram on the reverse circumscribed with the mint name and has a right facing bust circumscribed with Ragnald's name on the obverse. Another retains the monogram, although it is typically less literate in this issue, and has a glove or a hand on the obverse. The third type has what is either a hammer or a tau cross on one side with a drawn bow and arrow on the other side. These coins clearly contain some degree of pagan iconography, but the extent is uncertain and depends on how one interprets the designs. The right facing bust is clearly inspired by similar busts on Anglo-Saxon coins, but the hand/glove could either be the hand of God, as seen on Anglo-Saxon coins, or the glove of Thor. Similarly, a tau cross would be a Christian symbol, but a hammer would most likely be a pagan reference to Thor. Grierson and Blackburn refer to both the bust and the hand (they do not call it a glove) as deriving from West Saxon coins, only acknowledging the pagan influence by stating that the third

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<sup>98</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 296.

<sup>99</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 103-104.

<sup>100</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 105; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 322-323; Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 333-335; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 296-297.

design is a tau-cross that represents a hammer.<sup>101</sup> While also calling the hand/glove a hand, Blackburn mentions the theory that it is actually a glove and suggests that a cross on the cuff could indicate that the ambiguity was intentional; similarly, he refers to the hammer/tau-cross as a hammer that might double as a tau-cross.<sup>102</sup> Naismith argues along a similar vein, saying that the hammer/tau-cross could be either and acknowledging that the hand had been called a glove by nineteenth century historians, although he is adamant that it is a hand, not a glove.<sup>103</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, on the other hand, do not refer to the hammer as a tau-cross and are emphatic that most of the second type look less like a hand and more like a glove.<sup>104</sup>

This coinage of Ragnald (who died in 921) was short lived and was followed by a re-designed St. Peter coinage<sup>105</sup> (see Figure 8). These later St. Peter coins have a sword in between the two lines spelling out “Money of St. Peter” on the obverse, and either a cross with pellets, a mallet, or a tau-cross hammer circumscribed with the York mint signature on the reverse (again, Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, as well as Blackburn, do not mention the tau-cross<sup>106</sup>). In the coins with a cross on the reverse, a hammer appears on the obverse as an inverted “T” in “St Peter.”

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<sup>101</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 322.

<sup>102</sup> Blackburn, “The Coinage of Scandinavian York,” 334.

<sup>103</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 297.

<sup>104</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 105.

<sup>105</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 105-106; Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 323; Blackburn, “The Coinage of Scandinavian York,” 335; Blackburn, “The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw,” 209-211; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 297-298.

<sup>106</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 105-106; Blackburn, “The Coinage of Scandinavian York,” 335; Blackburn, “The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw,” 209-210.



Figure 8. Coinage of Ragnald I and Sword St. Peter Variants. (A) Ragnald's Bow and Arrow type<sup>107</sup> (B) Sword St. Peter Cross variant<sup>108</sup> (B) Sword St. Peter Tau-Cross/Hammer variant<sup>109</sup> (C) Sword St. Peter Mallet variant.<sup>110</sup>

<sup>107</sup> *Coin*, n.d., NLM-F304C3, Portable Antiquities Scheme, <https://finds.org.uk/database/artefacts/record/id/605901>. Cropped out coin.

<sup>108</sup> *Silver Coin*, n.d., 1915,0507.772, AN361946001, The British Museum, [http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection\\_online/collection\\_object\\_details.aspx?objectId=1068678&partId=1](http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=1068678&partId=1).

<sup>109</sup> *Viking Kingdom of York, c. 896, St Peter*, n.d., Lot 125, The Academic Collection of Lord Stewartby: English Coins part 1, Anglo-Saxon and Norman Coins, <https://www.the-saleroom.com/en-gb/auction-catalogues/spink/catalogue-id-srspi10077/lot-12fe5d49-cc52-4f2e-a096-a5b700b91383>.

<sup>110</sup> n.d., Auction 146, Lot Number 267, CoinArchives, <https://www.coinarchives.com/w/lotviewer.php?LotID=3034917&AucID=3102&Lot=267&Val=d2e404a4f99b4f1efb906ecca163b931>. Changed background to white.

There are three rare derivatives of these Sword St. Peter coins, generally found in a variety of hoards located south of the Humber that have been dated to the 920's.<sup>111</sup> One type names King Sihtric as the two-line obverse inscription; these coins have all three types of reverses seen in the sword St. Peter coinage, although the hammer/tau-cross now looks more like a T. The cross variety inconsistently has the hammer on the obverse, and some of the inscriptions of some coins are so blundered that they may be imitations. While King Sihtric was Ragnald's successor at York, no legible inscription on these coins has a York mint signature, the die-cutting design resembles that of the Five Boroughs, and some of the same moneyers' names later appear on coins of Wessex minted in Lincoln. For these reasons the consensus is that these coins were minted in the Five Boroughs and resemble York coins on account of Northumbrian influence on the region in the 920's.

The other Sword St. Peter derivatives are an issue named for St. Martin and an anonymous issue.<sup>112</sup> The former is nearly identical to the variant of Sword St. Peter coinage that has a cross on the reverse, right down to the inverted "T-hammer" on the obverse, the only difference being that the obverse inscription is "St. Martin" and the reverse has a mint signature for Lincoln, not York. The anonymous derivative has a circumscribed inscription around the sword rather than a two-lined one, with a T on the other side like those of the coins of Sihtric. Every inscription on all

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<sup>111</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 107; Blackburn, "The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw," 210-212; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 302-303.

<sup>112</sup> Blunt, Stewart, and Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England*, 106-107; Blackburn, "The Two Scandinavian Kingdoms of the Danelaw," 210-212; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 302-303.



five anonymous specimens are completely unintelligible, although one appears to be copying the name off King Edward from a West Saxon coin.

A predominant feature throughout all of the Anglo-Viking coinage is continental influence in some form. South of the Humber, many imitative moneyers and most of the St. Edmund moneyers had continental names, indicating that these moneyers were likely not native to England.<sup>113</sup> This is often taken to mean that Viking rulers had brought in moneyers from the continent; however, caution is called for, as early tenth Century West Saxon kings did the same,<sup>114</sup> indicating that this was not a uniquely Viking phenomena. Continental influence is even stronger on Northumbrian Anglo-Viking issues; indeed, in their predominant use of Christian motifs, their inclusion of a mint name rather than a moneyer's name, and their random relative orientation of the obverse and reverse dies<sup>115</sup> they resemble continental coins more than Anglo-Saxon coins.<sup>116</sup>

### **The Case for Ecclesiastical Coinage**

The earlier coinage of the Southern Danelaw is not well explained by continuous royal minting from the coinage of King Edmund in the 860's up to the Anglo-Viking coinages as Blackburn suggests. While Blackburn makes a strong argument that minting in East Anglia was not interrupted during the Viking settlement, this does not imply continuity in minting authority.

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<sup>113</sup> Blackburn, "Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting," 128; Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages," 31; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 289, 292.

<sup>114</sup> Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 315-316.

<sup>115</sup> Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 338-339.

<sup>116</sup> Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 332; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 298.

Rather, it simply means that moneyers continued to work. It is reasonable to expect the moneyers to defer to an authority to back up their coins; however, that does not mean that these authorities had any influence over the coins themselves.

The inconsistency with which King Guthrum's name appears on coins speaks against royal minting in the imitative phase of Anglo-Viking coinage. The key single find that Blackburn convincingly uses to suggest continuity in minting (the Temple coin that bears Guthrum's name) means that by the end of the minting of Temple coins Guthrum was at the very least an authority to be recognized by moneyers, if not an authority to answer to. But if Guthrum took actions to ensure his name was on this late Temple coin, why then did most of the two-line imitations imitate Alfred's name? Surely Guthrum would also ensure his name was on all of the coins. Collectively, the imitative coinage speaks of moneyers who did not have a clear authority that they thought they needed to defer to.

The lack of preexisting regal coinage in Southumbrian England makes the argument for royal minting of the St. Edmund Memorial coinage less compelling. With the imitative Anglo-Viking coinage not having a clear authority behind it, the adoption of a new design for coins that came to dominate East Anglian currency indicates some authority stepped in and took control of minting. It is unlikely that a king, or any authority for that matter, would take such a step and not put their name on the new coinage. This makes the anonymity of the St. Edmund Memorial coinage all the more perplexing. It supports the theory in which the invocation of St. Edmund functions as the authority's signature, that is, it supports the St. Edmund Memorial coinage being an ecclesiastical issue.

The theory that Viking kings were behind the early Anglo-Viking issues of Northumbria is similarly unsatisfying because if what we guess of King Siefredus and of King Cnut is true, then

they both seem to have ruled in the mold of a traditional Viking and not the mold of an Anglo-Saxon. By comparing Irish and English annals Smyth makes a strong argument that the *Siegfred* who raided the western coast of Wessex followed up with a raid on Dublin.<sup>117</sup> Such raiding around the entire Irish sea is very reminiscent of better-known Viking kings,<sup>118</sup> and if Cnut really is the Knut of the sagas then he clearly was a Viking through and through. This image of these kings leaves one wondering why they would go through the trouble of putting their names on coins. In contrast to Ragnald in 919, who asserted his kingship through coins by co-opting an already up and running mint, for Siegfredus and Cnut such a statement required the set-up of a whole new mint which is an enterprise atypical of a late ninth to early tenth century Viking.

The timing of the opening of York's mint is even more odd in light of the stark difference between Siegfredus and his predecessor Guthfrith. Guthfrith was certainly not your typical Viking, if he could be called a Viking at all. The *Annals of St. Cuthbert* state that the monks of St. Cuthbert played a critical role in the selection of Guthfrith as king, and that his coronation mixed both Christian and pagan elements.<sup>119</sup> Athelweard confirms that he was at the very least friendly to the church by noting that he was buried in the York minster.<sup>120</sup> Thus, as best as we can tell, the kings who are named on the earliest Anglo-Viking coins of Northumbria were not as Christianized as their predecessor. While this does not mean that these coins could not be regal issues, it certainly inclines one towards other plausible theories.

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<sup>117</sup> Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, I 32-37.

<sup>118</sup> Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*; Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*.

<sup>119</sup> Abrams, "The Conversion of the Danelaw," 37.

<sup>120</sup> "The Chronicle of Fabius Ethelwerd," 37, a. 896. While Athelweard spells the names slightly differently, it is thought he is referring to the same person as the *Annals of St. Cuthbert* (Abrams, "The Conversion of the Danelaw," 37).

Guthfrith's lack of interest in coinage is highlighted by the one imitative coin with his name on it. While one cannot discount the possibility of this Guthfrith being a different, otherwise unknown Guthfrith ruling some part of the Danelaw south of the Humber, it is more likely that this is the same Guthfrith of York we know of from written sources. The style of die-cutting used for this coin and for other coins of the same moneyer, as well as the geographical find of the coin, strongly indicates that it was minted south of the Humber in the Five Boroughs and is not a single surviving specimen of an otherwise unknown imitative phase of coinage north of the Humber.<sup>121</sup> As it is unlikely that Guthfrith would oversee minting in the Five Boroughs but not in York, it was probably struck by a moneyer working autonomously but deferring to a higher authority. That such could happen in Guthfrith's territory demonstrates his apparent lack of interest in coins, as it means he allowed minting in his name south of the Humber without developing it north of the Humber. This makes it all the more improbable that the less Christianized rulers acting more like typical Vikings would take an interest immediately after his reign.

If we take up the theory that the church was the only centralized authority directing coinage during the period that Vikings controlled the Danelaw, then these apparent irregularities in the origin of Anglo-Viking minting systems are no longer irregular. From this perspective, the puppet Anglo-Saxon kings of East Anglia who succeeded Edmund continued to mint their own coins, even to the point of overhauling the design. When the Vikings took over, moneyers continued to ply their trade, presumably mimicking the two-line design dominant in West Saxon coins to obtain legitimacy. Eventually, the church asserted control over minting in the form of the St. Edmund Memorial coinage. In Northumbria, the weak coinage of pre-Viking Northumbria was discontinued, and no coins were minted north of the Humber for several decades. Eventually, the

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<sup>121</sup> Blackburn, "The Ashdon (Essex) Hoard," 18-20.

church organized minting under King Siefredus – perhaps in order to pay a geld to the new king who was less Christianized, and thus possibly less friendly to the church, than his predecessor? – and around ten years later switched to the St. Peter design.

The designs of Anglo-Viking coins also support the theory of ecclesiastical minting. Most noticeably, this is the best explanation for the invocation of a saint's name on the St. Edmund and St. Peter coinages, as this would be consistent with earlier Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon coins that likewise invoked a saint's name. Saints' names are common in the coins of ninth century Frankia, and these coins are thought to be ecclesiastical issues.<sup>122</sup> Such a practice was not common in Anglo-Saxon England, though there is one instance in the early ninth century, during the reign of King Eberghth of Wessex, where on coins of Rochester the moneyer's name is replaced with an invocation of St. Andrew, the patron saint of the Rochester cathedral. It is plausible that these were an ecclesiastical issue, but this is by no means certain.<sup>123</sup> While such precedents do not conclusively prove that later invocations of a saint's name also indicate ecclesiastical minting, they do make this the more likely theory in the absence of other evidence. This is especially true of the St. Peter coinage, which seems to have been minted in the vein of Carolingian coins rather than the vein of Anglo-Saxon coins<sup>124</sup> and thus has a better tie to the stronger precedent.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Blackburn, "The Coinage of Scandinavian York," 333.

<sup>123</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 154.

<sup>124</sup> For this reason I do not adhere to the theory that the St. Peter inscription is necessarily modelled off of the St. Edmund inscription.

<sup>125</sup> This is not to say that the St. Edmund Memorial coinage cannot be related to Carolingian precedent, as many moneyers are from the continent and Anglo-Saxon coins did not uncommonly draw on Continental designs.

The lows and highs in literacy of Anglo-Viking coinage further support their ecclesiastical rather than royal backing. Blackburn notes that the poor literacy of the imitative coinage is reminiscent of the first coins issued elsewhere in the Viking world and takes this to support his view that Anglo-Viking issues were regal.<sup>126</sup> However, this poor literacy started with the coinage of the puppet kings of East Anglia, not with the inception of Anglo-Viking coinage. This gives the impression that illiterate coins were the result of a breakdown of central control and not of a new minting authority still learning the ropes, and it is consistent with the theory that moneyers operated largely unsupervised during the imitative phase. Such a theory is further supported by the blundered inscriptions appearing on West Saxon coins minted in East Anglia after the region was conquered by Wessex in 918,<sup>127</sup> an instance of poor literacy which cannot be attributed to Viking supervision of the minting.

Indeed, the decentralized, moneyer-driven nature of the imitative coinage turns Blackburn's argument on its head. Both the St. Edmund Memorial coinage and the earliest Anglo-Viking Northumbrian issues were high points of literacy in Anglo-Viking minting. If illiterate coins were the hallmark of a nascent Viking-authorized currency system, then why were the first Anglo-Viking coinages clearly issued by a single authority so literate? This gives cause to look for other authorities besides Viking kings for the issuing of Anglo-Viking coins, and the church is a ready alternative.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages," 29-30.

<sup>127</sup> Blackburn, "Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting," 208; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 187.

<sup>128</sup> A corollary to this position is that the decline in literacy seen in the St. Edmund and Swordless St. Peter coins must correspond with a decline in the church's control of minting, which would cohere well with the military losses that the Vikings suffered at the hands of

Blackburn argues that two other features of the imitative coinage indicate royal minting on account of their similarity to later Scandinavian and Dublin coinages: the imitation of West Saxon coins and the use of dies taken from Quentovic.<sup>129</sup> While this is potent evidence in favor of royal minting, the comparison to later Viking issues is not perfect, other explanations of this evidence are possible, and this evidence must be weighed against the evidence supporting decentralized imitative minting.

The continuous nature of minting complicates how to best interpret the imitative nature of the earliest issues. Unlike *de novo* Viking and Scandinavian coinage systems, in the Danelaw there were pre-existing coin designs to use as sources of legitimacy. The transition to West Saxon imitations was clearly a conscious decision on somebody's part, but it could not be mere attempt to borrow legitimacy from a powerful neighbor. There is no obviously best way to understand this decision. It certainly could have been made by the Viking rulers in order to emulate West Saxon kings. It also could have been made by the moneyers if West Saxon coins were considered a more trustworthy model to mimic. There are certainly other possible explanations; however, these two examples illustrate that this attribute does not conclusively support royal minting.

The dies taken from Quentovic very well could have been taken during a Viking raid and then given to moneyers expected to mint coins for the Vikings who took them. However, it is also entirely plausible, albeit less likely, that a moneyer originating on the continent brought the dies with them, or even that a die-cutter came over with the stream of moneyers. Regardless, the same

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Wessex during this same period (Grierson and Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, 322; *The Anglo-Saxon*, 61-67, a. 910-918).

<sup>129</sup> Blackburn, "Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian Minting," 127-128 & 140; Blackburn, "Guthrum and the Earliest Danelaw Coinages," 26-27.

continuity issue that plagues other similarities to later Viking issues plagues this similarity: as there was no need to re-start minting in East Anglia, the typical features of nascent Viking coinages would not be expected, and if they are observed they would not serve the same function.

Overall then, the similarities between Anglo-Viking coins and later coinages in the Viking world do not refute the conclusion that Anglo-Viking coins were produced by unsupervised moneyers. These context in which Anglo-Viking coins were minted is sufficiently different for these similarities to not negate the bulk of the evidence previously considered. Furthermore, if illiterate inscriptions, imitative designs, and stolen dies are characteristic of the first coins produced by a Viking authority, then the St. Edmund and St. Peter coinages fail to meet these expectations.

The use of Christian motifs on Anglo-Viking coins is simply explained, albeit in a mundane way, if the coins were from an ecclesiastical mint. Such Christian imagery and the veneration of an Anglo-Saxon saint is not at all out of line with what one could expect from coinage designed by the church.<sup>130</sup> Indeed, the design features of Anglo-Viking coins that are surprising under the theory ecclesiastical minting are the complement what is surprising under the theory of royal minting. The appearance of kings' names on the earliest Northumbrian issues and of pagan motifs and King Ragnald's name on later Northumbrian issues are not design features one would expect on coins issued from an ecclesiastical mint.

These oddities, however, especially the later ones, are not so surprising when one considers the constraints the church would be working under at the time. For instance, when Ragnald took control of York he clearly would have posed a significant challenge to any authority the church had – if the mint needed to acknowledge him rather than St. Peter for a few years, so be it. This

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<sup>130</sup> Although it is interesting that the Viking rulers of East Anglia would allow the veneration of a saint who defied their forebearers.



would negate any political benefit the church may have for minting, but at least it could retain the economic benefit. In fact, the quick reversion to St. Peter's name on the coinage (or even putting his name on it the first time) makes the most sense if there was not direct royal control of the mint – why would the royal court do this, especially one that we have good reason to think was not Christianized at the time?<sup>131</sup> In contrast, it is sensible that the church, under duress, would put King Ragnald's name on the coins, and then a few years later, under less duress, put St. Peter's name back on the coins but keep certain pagan elements. That the only Sword St. Peter design without a trace of pagan iconography on the reverse is also the only one that has a hammer on the obverse coheres well with a minting authority being constrained to make some sort of overture to the Viking rulers, regardless of what it might be.<sup>132</sup>

Similar duress could be expected if the church suddenly found York under control of a less Christianized king than it was used to; however, it would not explain why the Northumbrian church started minting in the first place if it needed to put the king's name on the coins. While on the surface this objection seems quite reasonable, it rests on the assumption that not claiming authority over the coins defeated the church's purpose in making coins. If this is not the case, then ecclesiastical minting remains entirely plausible. A simple, albeit speculative, scenario in which the church might begin minting with a royal name on coins is if the goal was merely raise revenue. This could be the case, for example, if the less friendly King Siefredus wanted to levy a tax on the

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<sup>131</sup> Abrams, "The Conversion of the Danelaw," 39.

<sup>132</sup> This requires that the Viking rulers considered the questionable elements to represent pagan motifs rather than Christian ones; I think there is enough ambiguity in these designs that it is likely they were seen this way by Viking rulers if not necessarily by the church as well.

church, or if the church were simply attempting to rebuild after inevitably losing a lot of resources<sup>133</sup> when the Vikings shared out the land.

### **The Danelaw Church**

If Anglo-Viking coins were issued by the church and not Viking rulers, then this would have profound implications for the political organization of the Danelaw. It would mean that the Church wielded significant power, possibly serving as the representative of the local Anglo-Saxon population. The question is, is the non-numismatic evidence consistent with such a strong church remaining in the Danelaw?

While sources on the status of the church during this period are rare, those that exist support the church of York being an important player in Northumbrian politics.<sup>134</sup> That there was a sufficient ecclesiastical structure after the Viking settlement is clear from the survival of the dioceses of York and Lindisfarne (although the seat of the latter moved).<sup>135</sup> In fact, the Archbishop of York clearly cooperated with the Viking rulers at the inception of Anglo-Viking York; the Great Viking Army set him up as one of their puppets while it campaigned south of the Humber.<sup>136</sup> There are hints that this cooperation continued past the Viking settlement. It has already been discussed

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<sup>133</sup> Abrams, “The Conversion of the Danelaw,” 33-35; Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 298.

<sup>134</sup> Rollason makes the stronger statement that the church was the dominant power in York (Rollason, “The Evidence of Historical Sources,” 313). Much of his argument is contained below, although he relies heavily on numismatic evidence purposely avoided here and speculates further on the power that Archbishop Wulfstan I held.

<sup>135</sup> Abrams, “The Conversion of the Danelaw,” 34.

<sup>136</sup> Rollason, “The Evidence of Historical Sources,” 313.

how Athelweard and the *History of St. Cuthbert* reveal that an early Viking king of York worked well with the church and was even buried in the York minster. Later in the tenth century the control of York see-sawed between Viking control and West Saxon control,<sup>137</sup> and the evidence suggests that the church of York played a key part in this struggle. For instance, after taking control of York in 939, the Viking Olaf Guthfrithsson mounted an invasion of the Five Boroughs that ended in a truce brokered by the southern Bishop (and later Archbishop of Canterbury) Odo and the Archbishop of York Wulfstan I. This indicates that the Archbishop of York supported Northumbrian Vikings and was trusted enough by them to broker the truce.<sup>138</sup> While this example is somewhat later than the period of minting covered here, it does support the idea of a strong York church coexisting with Viking rulers.

Nasismith argues against such a potent York church, noting that tenth century bishops are not main characters in later histories of tenth century Northumbria, that the church of York did not have many resources during the late Anglo-Saxon period, and that little to nothing is known about the archbishops at the turn of the tenth century, the moment when the coinage starts.<sup>139</sup> However, later histories should not be used to undercut the sense of importance given to the archbishops by the contemporaneous *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*. A dearth of other financial resources simply makes for motivation to mint coins,<sup>140</sup> and if it were not for coins (which only help for one decade's worth of time at the maximum anyway) we would know equally little about non-ecclesiastical authorities in York during this period. Overall, it seems quite likely that the church of York was an important

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<sup>137</sup> Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, II.

<sup>138</sup> Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin*, II 91-93.

<sup>139</sup> Naismith, *Medieval European Coinage*, 298.

<sup>140</sup> Which the church would certainly not have had a monopoly on later in the ninth century when it was under West Saxon control.

political force during this period, making it quite plausible that it could have authorized Northumbrian Anglo-Viking minting.

South of the Humber, less is known about the church's fate during the Viking settlement. What is known with certainty is that the conquests of the Great Viking Army were more disruptive here than they were in Northumbria. No bishoprics from south of the Humber survived.<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, we have a letter from Pope Formosus (r. 891-896) to Anglo-Saxon bishops which speaks of there being a substantial number of unfilled posts.<sup>142</sup>

Nonetheless, there is evidence that the Southumbrian church survived to some degree. Important churches in the Five Boroughs seem to have survived the settlement,<sup>143</sup> and saints relics in East Anglia were generally not disturbed.<sup>144</sup> Wessex also seems to have possibly been partly responsible for ecclesiastical disruption, which would indicate that there was a church to disrupt when Wessex conquered Southumbrian Danelaw. It was quite common for Wessex to try to disrupt local cults and allegiances by moving important saints' relics,<sup>145</sup> and Hart suggests that they may have done so with the remains of St. Edmund.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, in the same letter Pope Formosus speaks of the bishops having failed to resist heathenism sufficiently, but he also

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<sup>141</sup> Abrams, "The Conversion of the Danelaw," 34; Hart, *The Danelaw*, 30.

<sup>142</sup> Abrams, "The Conversion of the Danelaw," 38.

<sup>143</sup> D. M. Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw: Its Social Structure, c. 800-1100*, Studies in the Early History of Britain (London: Continuum, 2000), <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=265442&site=ehost-live&scope=site>, 220-257. Hadley is focused on the Northern Danelaw, so the lack of a similar statement about East Anglian churches means nothing one way or the other.

<sup>144</sup> Hart, *The Danelaw*, 32.

<sup>145</sup> Hadley, *The Northern Danelaw*, 266.

<sup>146</sup> Hart, *The Danelaw*, 31.

commends their teaching<sup>147</sup> – this would be consistent with the church doing what it needed to in order to survive and being back on secure footing by the 890's, right when the St. Edmund Memorial coinage began.

In fact, it is hard to imagine any scenario in which the St. Edmund Memorial coinage was minted in the absence of an institutional church. If the church was not behind it, then the next most likely explanation would be that Viking rulers authorized its issue. This would imply Christianization of the Viking rulers, which in turn would make it likely that there was some sort of institutional church. Overall, it is hard to escape the conclusion that the church continued to exist as an institution in some capacity.

Such a church authorizing minting is consistent with the timeline of the St. Edmund Memorial coinage. As the church of Norwich, or whichever city was the locus of East Anglian minting, recovered from the impact of the Viking settlement it asserted authority over local minting. This resulted in the earliest coinage issued by a small number of highly skilled moneyers and die-cutters concomitantly with later issues of imitative coinage. As the church's regional prestige and/or the cult of St. Edmund grew, more mints and moneyers began issuing the coinage until it dominated Southumbrian England, be it because the single church where the minting originated became an important regional political force or because it served as a model for other local churches.

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<sup>147</sup> Abrams, "The Conversion of the Danelaw," 38.

## Conclusion

The facts of the matter are quick to summarize. Prior to the Viking invasions, England had a strong currency that was generally backed up by royal authority, but with ecclesiastical issues not uncommon. An issue invoking the name of St. Andrew may have been among these ecclesiastical issues, as Carolingian coins invoking a saint's name are commonly thought to be ecclesiastical. This coinage system was clearly affected by the Viking settlement of parts of England in the second half of the ninth century. Nevertheless, by the end of the ninth century the Danelaw was unique in being the only part of the Viking world with a strong currency system. South of the Humber, an imitative phase of various coins mimicking West Saxon coins (and, rarely, East Anglian coins) was likely continuous with pre-Viking East Anglian minting. In the mid 890's, this progressed into the more homogenous St. Edmund Memorial coinage reminiscent of pre-Viking East Anglian coins and invoking the name of St. Edmund in place of a king's name. The York mint, on the other hand, did not begin producing coins until the mid 890's. These coins were more Carolingian in design than Anglo-Saxon, initially containing a variety of kings' names, and in c. 905 progressed into a long-lasting coinage invoking the name of St. Peter in place of a king's name. This coinage was briefly interrupted by regal coinage in the name of King Ragnald that contained possible, but not certain, pagan motifs. The St. Peter coinage soon resumed however, but now it incorporated a sword in the design and it retained the possibly pagan motifs introduced during Ragnald's reign. There is no precedent for Vikings, who were accustomed to trading in bullion, issuing coinage on such a large scale. When Vikings start minting coins elsewhere later in the tenth century, their currency often starts out with poor literacy and as imitations of a pre-existing currency to the extent that they even use dies taken from neighboring countries.

The facts leave much room open for interpretation. One unresolved question about these coins is what authority, if any, backed their minting. The contending answers to this question are the church and the Viking kings, although it must be stressed that this is a false dichotomy and a spectrum of answers is possible. It has been argued here that if we want to look for a single answer, ecclesiastical minting of Anglo-Viking coins is more likely than royal minting.

The varied nature of the imitative coins indicates that during this stage of Anglo-Viking minting, moneyers were likely working unsupervised. This means that the St. Edmund Memorial coinage was the first coinage south of the Humber with a central authority behind the design, and it is unlikely that a king would exert such influence without putting his name on the coin. This leaves ecclesiastical minting as the most likely scenario south of the Humber, a conclusion supported by the high literacy of the early St. Edmund Memorial coinage and the possible precedent of the St. Andrews coinage.

The church is similarly likely to have authorized the Anglo-Viking coinage in Northumbria, as (a) the kings mentioned on early Anglo-Viking coins of Northumbria followed (according to written sources) more traditional Viking notions of kingship and would therefore have been unlikely to start a new mint, (b) the first issues are more innovative and of a higher quality than one would expect for the first coins being minted by Viking rulers, and (c) these coins closely resemble Carolingian coins, for which there is precedent for the invocation of a saint's name to indicate an ecclesiastical issue.

While non-numismatic sources on the history of the Danelaw are too few and far between to make strong statements about the status of the church during the time period under consideration, the sources that are available are consistent with the notion of there being a Danelaw church capable of issuing coins. As the church of York is known to have had few other resources

later in the tenth century, the motivation for the Northumbrian church was likely to gain revenue, and this could very well have been true of the Southumbrian church as well. This would explain why the church was willing to defer to other authorities by including the name of Viking kings or even a pagan symbol if it needed to in order to continue minting.

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