ROGER OF WENDOVER'S DATE FOR EADGAR'S COINAGE REFORM

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IN the middle 1950s there began to be propounded, with progressive precision, a concept of the structure of the later Anglo-Saxon coinage which perhaps can best be described as periodic or cyclic.[1] It was argued that the evidence of coin-hoards, and especially of those from Scandinavia, many of them still unpublished, is consistent only with the supposition that in England after Eadgar's reform[2] normally no more than one coin-type was in issue and enjoying full legal currency at any one time; and from this proponents of the system, and it is very much a system, have gone on to postulate an approximate but absolute as well as relative chronology for the twenty-four substantive types, with the names of eight of the last nine Anglo-Saxon kings, which span the period of just over ninety-three years from shortly after Eadgar's imperial coronation at Bath on 11 May 973 until news of Harold's death at Battle on 14 October 1066 may be supposed to have been received, and acted upon, at the most remote of the English mints.[3] This hoard-evidence is as extensive as convincing, and especially once the obvious distinction is drawn between finds concealed within the jurisdiction of the English king, and those recovered from territory where his writ can never have run. In the same way, it behoves the student carefully to distinguish hoards from England put down before Cnut's death, and those committed to the soil after public confidence in the fineness of the silver had been shaken by the debasement associated with the 1040s.[4] In the earlier period English finds, whether large or small, tend to be composed of coins of one or at most two types, while in the later a distinction emerges between 'currency' finds where relatively small numbers of coins are still just of one issue, and 'speculative' hoards where large numbers of coins are distributed over quite a run of successive types.[5]

Hoards from outside England observe, of course, quite other norms, but in their own way can be quite revealing. A cardinal example from Skåne in southern Sweden too long ignored is the 1842 Reslöv find where the English element is essentially composed of two substantive and successive types of Æthelræd II.[6] Only three of the pence are of the so-called First Hand issue relatively common in Scandinavian finds because of the incidence of raiding of England in the period when it may be supposed to have been current, but twenty-seven are of the much less frequently met with Second Hand issue which belongs to the later 980s and which was struck to an appreciably lighter weight-standard. With them, too, must be reckoned twenty-two coins of the late variety

[1] *NNUM* 1954, pp. 152–6.
[2] *A/S Coins*, pp. 136–68.
[3] Ibid., pp. 169–87.
[4] *BNJ* XXX, i (1961), 82–7.
[5] *A/S Coins*, pp. 163–5.
[6] SHM Inv. 1025 (= G. Hatz, *Handel und Verkehr zwischen dem Deutschen Reich und Schweden in der späten Wikingerzeit*, Stockholm, 1974, p. 216, no. 87). Particularly commended to English students is the date 996 proposed for the German *Schlussmünz*.

known to numismatists as Benediction Hand but present in such quantity in the Scandinavian hoards that it is difficult to dissociate it from the summer of 991,[7] a total of forty-nine coins for the issue as a whole. The second substantive type represented in the Reslöv hoard is the Crux emission of which there are eighty-seven examples. The type is a relatively heavy one associated by sexennialists with the years 991–7, and is the first to be massively represented in Scandinavian hoards, no doubt as a consequence of its being that current at the time when the first Danegelds were levied and paid.[8] Patently the Second Hand coins had been acquired by the Reslöv hoarder, or an intermediary, in England and at a time when the considerably heavier First Hand pennies which preceded them had been effectively demonetized, and so the ground would seem cut from under the feet of those who have tried to argue that Second Hand was merely a variety of First Hand, late perhaps, but essentially concurrent. In this connection, though, it should be remarked that the import of Reslöv is precisely that of the admittedly smaller finds from Isleworth in England (1886),[9] Lymose in Denmark (1942),[10] and Piikkio in Finland (1949)[11] which seem particularly relevant to the problem under discussion. However, it is not the purpose of this note to attempt systematic exposition of the errors or flaws of reasoning which appear to disqualify recent attempts to suggest plausible alternatives to the sexennial cycle which some of us still believe was operative from a date late in the reign of Eadgar until the anarchy of the last years of Æthelræd II. Suffice it to say that they will be found, without exception, to come to grief on the Scylla and Charybdis of the dates for the beginning of imitative coinages in Dublin, Norway, and Sweden.[12] Even a French hoard like that from Le Puy (1943),[13] or a German hoard such as that from Dorow (1973),[14] too, may be thought to provide powerful arguments against our placing the inception of the Long Cross issue substantially earlier than 997, or the introduction of the terminal variants of Crux anything like as late as the millennium.

What will be essayed here, on the other hand, is a reasoned refutation of historical rather than numismatic criticisms of the cyclic school's adoption of 973 as the year when Eadgar executed that major reform of the English coinage which is generally admitted to have occurred even by those to whom the concept of a sexennial type-cycle seems anathema. Nor is the essence of that reform in real dispute, the introduction of a uniform currency over the whole country with universal employment of the royal portrait as the obverse type, and on the reverse the invariable occurrence of the so-called mint-signature, an abbreviated indication of the place where the coin was struck. Few, too, would dispute that the reform was accompanied by the opening of a substantial number of new mints, while there appears to be general agreement that royal control of the coinage became at once more centralized and more effective. What does seem indigestible is the idea that the sexennial cycle could have been hit upon and made to work at the first attempt, and to this end much had been made of the

[7] The year of the first of Æthelræd's 'national' danegelds at the prompting of Archbishop Sigeric of Canterbury, *infra*, n. 8.

[8] *ASC* s.a. 991, cf. D. Whitelock *et al.*, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1961), p. 82.

[9] *NC* 1886, pp. 161–3.

[10] *SCBI* Copenhagen i, p. 29, no. 29—the coins are illustrated as nos. 1690–8 of pl. 71 of *SCBI* Copenhagen ii.

[11] *SCBI* Helsinki, pp. xxx and xxxi.

[12] *A/S England*, ii (1973), 145–54.

[13] *RN* 1952, pp. 59–169, cf. J. S. Boersma *et al.* edd., *Festoen (Festschrift A. N. Zadoks-Josephus Jitta)* (Groningen/Bussum, 1974), pp. 223–6.

[14] *Bodendenkmalpflege in Mecklenburg*, 1977 (Berlin, 1978), pp. 181–206.

inconsistency of dating to 973, allegedly just by calculation back from 1003, a recoinage which appears s.a. 975 in the one literary source to mention it, the Latin chronicle compiled at St. Albans by the thirteenth-century monk Roger of Wendover.[15] The tenor of this criticism seems to run more or less as follows. In Roger the very brief notice of the reform occurs in an annal which is clearly dated 975, while also under the same year there is recorded Eadgar's death, an event which there is general agreement occurred upon 8 July 975.[16] Numismatists should, at least as a general rule, be scrupulous in their respect for any explicit statement which is afforded by a reputable historical source. In this case they have not been able to argue that numismatic grounds exist which present any absolute bar to the extant coins being reconciled with Roger's statement that the great recoinage took place in 975. It follows that numismatists should defer to Roger's authority, and accept in consequence that the thirteenth-century chronicler is right when he implies that Eadgar's reform of the currency is something that belongs to the last months if not indeed weeks of the reign.

What cannot be disputed is that prima facie Roger of Wendover does record the recoinage in an annal dated 975. It seems no less incontrovertible that Roger specifically records Eadgar's death as occurring 'eodem anno' ('in the same year'). Upon closer examination, though, the problem is by no means as simple nor as clear-cut as those critics who have written 'in 975, not 973' or 'the date 975 given by Roger of Wendover' have appeared to suppose.[17] Leaving aside the, by no means negligible, testimony of the surviving coins as something more appropriate to a purely numismatic discussion, it must be observed that the advocates of Roger's authority, or rather infallibility, in this matter of the recoinage have been more than discreet when it comes to comment on the accuracy or otherwise of certain others of his chronological pronouncements. For example, there is a discrepancy of five years between Roger's dating of the ravaging of Thanet (974) and that supplied by the so-called 'D' manuscript of the *Old English Chronicle* (969), a discrepancy uniformly resolved by reputable modern historians who appear without exception to have preferred 969.[18] It will have been noted, one hopes, that the rejected date is one which falls in precisely that chronological band, the two-year interval between Eadgar's imperial coronation and death, with which we are here more immediately concerned. In the same way, the obit of Archbishop Oscetel of York appears in Roger s.a. 972, but s.a. 971 in the 'C' manuscript of the *Old English Chronicle*, and once again it is not Roger's dating that has commended itself to modern scholarship.[19] In other words, where Roger's datings are capable of being checked against other literary sources of the period, they have not been found to be uniformly reliable, and the objection is one that loses nothing of its force when it is freely admitted that the thirteenth-century chronicler's errors derive from his prime informant where Eadgar's reign is concerned, the twelfth-century monastic precursor known usually as Florence of Worcester.[20]

At this point it begins to be even more desirable that the student should look very

[15] *Chronicon sive flores Historiarum* ('*Flores*'), ed. H. O. Coxe, i (London, 1841).

[16] F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, 3rd edn. (Oxford, 1971), p. 372; F. M. Powicke and E. B. Fryde, *A Handbook of British Chronology* (London, 1961), p. 28.

[17] For the fullest and ablest critique of the concept of the sexennial cycle, *AfS England*, v (1976), 192–205.

[18] *ASC* s.a. 969, cf. D. Whitelock *et al.*, p. 76.

[19] Ibid. s.a. 971; Powicke and Fryde, op. cit., p. 263.

[20] *Chronicon ex chronicis* ('*Chronicon*'), ed. B. Thorpe, i (London, 1848).

closely into the structure of annal for 975 as it appears on pp. 415–17 of the printed text of Roger:

De prudentia sive munificentia Eadgari regis

Anno Domini DCCCCLXXV. rex Eadgarus Pacificus, regni sui prospiciens utiliti pariter et quieti, quatuor millia octingentas sibi robustas congregavit naves; e quibus mille ducentas in plaga Angliæ orientali, mille ducentas in occidentali, mille ducentas in australi, mille ducentas in septentrionali pelago constituit, ut ad defensionem regni sui contra exteras nationes bellorum discrimina sustineret. Habebat autem præterea omni tempore vitæ suæ consuetudinem per omnes regni provincias transire, ut quomodo legum jura et suorum statuta decretorum a principibus observarentur, et ne pauperes a potentibus præjudicium passi opprimerentur, diligenter investigare solebat, in uno fortitudini, in altero justitiæ studens, et reipublicæ regnique utilitati consulens in utroque; hinc hostibus circumquaque timor, et omnium amor erga eum excreverat subditorum. Deinde per totam Angliam novam fieri præcepit monetam, quia vetus vitio tonsorum adeo erat corrupta, ut vix nummus obolum appenderet in statera. Eodem quoque tempore Alfsius episcopus et comes Eadulfus Kinredum, regem Scotorum, ad regem Eadgarum conduxerunt; quem cum perduxissent ad regem, multa donaria a regia largitate suscepit, inter quæ contulit ei centum uncias auri purissimi, cum multis sericis ornamentis et annulis, cum lapidibus pretiosis; dedit præterea eidem regi terram totam, quae 'Laudian' patria lingua nuncupatur, hac conditione, ut annis singulis in festivitatibus præcipuis, quando rex et ejus successores diadema portarent, venirent ad curiam, et cum cæteris regni principibus festum cum lætitia celebrarent; dedit insuper ei rex mansiones in itinere plurimas, ut ipse et ejus successores ad festum venientes ac denuo revertentes hospitari valuissent, quæ usque in tempora regis Henrici secundi in potestate regum Scotiæ remanserunt.

De morte Eadgari, et successione Eadwardi

Eodem anno flos et decus regum, gloria et honor Anglorum, rex Pacificus Eadgarus, cujus largitas et magnificentia totam jam Europam repleverat, anno ætatis suae trigesimo secundo, regno vero sedecimo, ex hac vita transiens pro regno terreno commutavit æternum; cujus corpus Glastoniæ delatum est et ibidem more regio tumulatum.

The relevant portion falls naturally into two sections or chapters each with its own heading. The first section headed 'De prudentia sive munificentia Eadgari regis' ('Concerning the prudence and munificence of King Eadgar') consists of four sentences, admittedly long ones with many dependent clauses, while the second headed 'De morte Eadgari, et successione Eadwardi' ('Concerning Eadgar's death and Edward's succession') likewise comprises four sentences, though here it is only the first that concerns us with its statement that Eadgar died. The first sentence of the first chapter ('rex Eadgarus Pacificus . . . bellorum discrimina sustinerent') describes a muster of the English navy and the stationing of fleets, their size quite incredibly exaggerated, along the four coasts. The incident is one taken from Florence, but in point of fact in the earlier account the passage *follows* the record of Eadgar's death, and belongs to a species of panegyric reviewing the achievements of the whole reign:[21]

Anglici orbis basileus, flos et decus antecessorum regum, pacificus rex Eadgarus, non minus memorabilis Anglis quam Romulus Romanis, Cyrus Persis, Alexander Macedonibus, Arsaces Parthis, Karolus Magnus Francis, postquam cuncta regaliter consummavit, anno ætatis suae XXXII°., regni autem illius in Mercia et Northymbria XIX°., ex quo vero per totam Angliam regnavit XVI°., indictione tertia VIII. Julii, feria quinta, ex hac vita transivit, filiumque suum Eadwardum et regni et morum hæredem reliquit: corpus vero illius Glæstoniam delatum, regio more est tumulatum. Is itaque dum viveret III.DC. robustas sibi congregaverat naves, ex quibus, Paschali emensa solennitate, omni anno M.CC. in orientali, M.CC. in occidentali, M.CC. in septentrionali insulæ plaga coadunare, et ad

[21] *Chronicon*, ed. cit., pp. 143–4.

occidentalem cum orientali classe, et, illa remissa, ad borealem cum occidentali, ipsaque remissa, cum boreali ad orientalem classem remigare, eoque modo totam insulam omni æstate consueverat circumnavigare, viriliter hoc agens ad defensionem contra exteros regni sui, et suum suorumque ad bellicos usus exercitium. Hieme autem et vere, infra regnum usquequaque per omnes provincias Anglorum transire, et quomodo legum jura, et suorum statuta decretorum a principibus observarentur, neve pauperes a potentibus præjudicium passi opprimerentur, diligenter solebat investigare. In uno fortitudini, in altero justitiæ studens, in utroque reipublicæ et regni utilitatibus consulens. Hinc hostibus circumquaque timor, et omnium sibi subditorum erga eum excreverat amor: cujus decessu totius regni status est perturbatus, et post tempus laetitiæ, quod illius tempore stabat pacifice, coepit tribulatio undique advenire. . . .

The dislocation is one which seems surely significant, and at all events should not be passed over in silence. The second sentence in the Roger annal ('Habebat autem præterea . . . eum excreverat subditorum') also is taken from Florence's eulogy of the *dead* king, and records how 'omni tempore vitæ suæ' ('throughout his life') Eadgar was wont to journey the length and breadth of his kingdom to ensure that justice was being done, and there is a further reference to his popularity in the Danelaw, a popularity which we know to have been reinforced by legislation which has been dated as early as 962/3 but which there is now a tendency to give to the early 970s.[22]

The third sentence in Roger's narrative ('Deinde per totam Angliam . . . appenderet in statera'), that which concerns the recoinage, not only is very much the shortest, but is not taken from Florence, nor apparently from any other surviving source. The principal verb is in the aorist, and the sentence introduced by 'deinde' ('then'), a little surprisingly perhaps when in the preceding sentence all three of the main verbs had been in the imperfect or the pluperfect tense. If in this particular context, then, 'deinde' possesses any very precise chronological significance, it may well mean no more than that the recoinage was not the first step which the mature Eadgar had taken towards the consolidation of his realm, and certainly it could be thought unduly to strain the sense of the Latin original to insist that Roger here confronts us with a precise and ordered *seriatim* enumeration of Eadgar's principal acts between January—or even March?—975 and his death in the July. In any case we should be reluctant to suppose that the English navy really was mobilized in mid winter, even if we did not have the specific statement of William of Malmesbury, another twelfth-century chronicler with some claim to be considered informed, that the muster in fact occurred after Easter and so in the summer.[23]

It is the third of Roger's sentences, then, that concerns the recoinage, and it is surely remarkable that the fourth ('Eodem quoque tempore . . . regum Scotiæ remanserunt') should be prefaced by a chronological indication which allows of no ambiguity, the quite deliberate phrase 'eodem quoque tempore' ('at the same time'). Clearly the event described—and again the tense of the main verb is the aorist—was one supposed by Roger to have occurred more or less contemporaneously with the recoinage just described. At this juncture, too, Roger's authority may once again have failed to have survived, but it remains a sound historical principle that 'fontes perditæ non sunt multiplicandæ præter necessitatem' ('lost sources should not be needlessly multiplied'), while there is a distinct possibility, if not a presumption, that Roger is deriving his information from that same now-lost authority which had furnished him with the

[22] *ASE* ii (1973), p. 133, n. 6.

[23] *Gesta regum Anglorum* ('*Gesta*'), ed. W. Stubbs, i (London, 1887), 177–8 (= ed. T. D. Hardy, i, London, 1840, p. 252).

matter contained in the preceding sentence. If this is the case, and it seems very likely, it follows that the unusually precise chronological indication supplied by the formula 'eodem quoque tempore' goes back in all probability to Roger's source. Lacking this original one cannot say, of course, whether this last source did in fact suggest that the two temporally very closely related events really did occur in 975, or in any other year, nor can one even be confident that its own system of dating had any particular claim to be considered reliable, but what cannot be denied is that Roger either preserved or invented a very close chronological nexus between Eadgar's monetary reform and the event described at very considerable length in the fourth sentence of his annal for 975.

This event was the submission to Eadgar of Kenneth of Scotland, and it was marked by the grant to the Scottish king of the whole of Lothian, Roger's 'Laudian'.[24] As it happens, too, there is a certain amount of evidence, some of it almost contemporary, to suggest that this submission should be dated somewhat earlier than the very last months, if not weeks, of Eadgar's reign.[25] It is as well to note at the very outset, moreover, that Roger himself, very possibly deceived by a scribal error in another of his sources, has even recorded Kenneth's submission under two different years. In his annal for 974 (*recte* 973—and again the error although shared with the 'C' manuscript of the *ASC*, is one which seems to go back in Roger's case to Florence)[26] we are told how 'Rinoth rex Scotorum' ('Kenneth, king of the Scots') did Eadgar homage at Chester along with a number of other princelings of the north and west, while here s.a. 975 we are told how 'Kinnedus rex Scotorum', patently the same man and nobody knows better than the numismatist the facility of scribal confusion between 'K' and 'R' at this very period, was conducted to Eadgar by Bishop Ælfsige and Earl Eadulf, and received royal gifts.[27] To the best of the writer's knowledge it has not been suggested by any modern historian of repute that Kenneth made two separate submissions in successive years, and there is indeed good reason to think that the occasion on which the bishop and earl conducted Kenneth to Eadgar was the 'Durbar' with associated 'Coronation Naval Review' recorded in the 'D' manuscript of the *Old English Chronicle* s.a. 972 (*recte* 973).[28] If, too, this cession of Lothian and lavish present-giving are in fact to be associated with Eadgar's ceremonial progress on the Dee, how much more plausible it becomes that the princelings of Scotland and of Wales should have chosen to render the English king some act of symbolic homage far too facilely represented in later English accounts as humiliating if not downright ridiculous?[29]

It emerges that the real problem for the numismatist is to establish once and for all the year when Kenneth made his submission to Eadgar—we must not be selective in our use of Roger and ignore, like denigrators of the sexennial cycle, the all-critical

[24] Roger of Wendover, op. et ed. citt., pp. 416–17: cf. Stenton, op. et ed. citt., p. 370.

[25] J. L. Nelson in P. H. Sawyer and I. N. Wood, edd., *Early Medieval Kingship* (Leeds, 1977), p. 69.

[26] *Chronicon*, ed. cit., p. 142—the perhaps ambiguous synchronism *hoc anno* (p. 143) formally appears to relate to an earthquake ignored by the *ASC*, but not impossibly refers to the death of Bishop Beorhthelm (Britelmus) in May 973 (Powicke and Fryde, op. cit., p. 205), though the point is not pressed here because so favourable to the run of the argument.

[27] *Flores*, ed. cit., pp. 415–16.

[28] Whitelock *et al.*, p. 77; Stenton, op. et ed. citt., pp. 369–70; Nelson, op. cit., pp. 69–70, etc.

[29] Less than two years earlier the East Viking Svyatoslav had seen nothing demeaning in choosing to come to treat with the Emperor John Tzimiskes in a small boat with himself as one of the rowers (S. Runciman, *A History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, London, 1930, p. 213).

'eodem quoque tempore' which links the monetary reform with Kenneth's visit and the grant of Lothian. Vital in this connection must be the testimony of much the earliest of our sources, the 'D' manuscript of the *Old English Chronicle*. According to this the tributary kings met Eadgar 'sona æfter' ('immediately after') the latter's coronation at Bath, an event securely dated, *inter alia* by its studied coincidence with Whit Sunday, to 11 May 973,[30] and this is an indication of date not lightly to be set aside. Indeed, the 973 date for Kenneth's submission and the cession of Lothian is that which has been adopted by the most distinguished of all modern authorities on the Anglo-Saxon period,[31] and we do well to remember that the late Sir Frank Stenton himself had remarked and stressed the importance of the two sentences in the first half of Roger's annal for 975 which do not go back to Florence of Worcester,[32] so that we must suppose that he was well aware of, but was not impressed by, Roger's inconsistent claim in the fifth sentence of the annal ('Eodem anno flos . . . more regio tumulatum') that Kenneth's submission and Eadgar's death both occurred 'eodem anno' ('in the same year').

The position which now obtains may be summed up as follows. If we are to believe Roger, Eadgar's recoinage, Kenneth's submission, and Eadgar's death all took place in the course of one and the same calendar year. Modern scholarship cannot accept this, and has pointed out that there is in fact much better, indeed well-nigh decisive, authority that Kenneth came to Eadgar some two years before the latter's death. Left in the air in consequence is the recoinage which is the subject of the present controversy. Are we to accept Roger's 'eodem quoque tempore' and maintain a chronological nexus very probably present in his lost source, or are we to prefer his 'eodem anno' which there is no reason to think owes anything to earlier authority? The 973 dating of the monetary reform, it will have been noticed, is far from trampling roughshod over our one literary source. Indeed, it can be claimed to exhibit far greater reverence for Roger's text, and, more important still, for the lost source which underlies the text at this juncture, with the result that the student who chooses to go whither *all* the evidence tends, the coins as well as the scanty and ambivalent historical record, and then prefers 973 as the year of the recoinage, is far from being the historical iconoclast that he has been painted in some criticism from the 1960s.

The added testimony of the coins is probably decisive, but even without its assistance one may be pardoned the suspicion that a consensus of responsible Anglo-Saxon historical scholarship would have come down on the side of Roger's linking of the monetary reform and Kenneth's submission. There is a built-in contradiction between the 'eodem quoque tempore' of the fourth sentence and the 'eodem anno' of the fifth that all but the most superficial reader has to try to resolve, and what amounts to an element of superficiality in any evasion of the difficulty finding expression in the facile phrases 'in 975, not 973' and 'the date 975 given by Roger of Wendover'. What the serious student has to do is to examine the internal structure of the whole annal for 975, when it very soon emerges not just that the third and fourth sentences enjoy a very

[30] We may note the insistence on Whit Sunday in the different sources, e.g. *on Pentecoste maesse dæi* (*ASC* (E) s.a. 972, ed. C. Plummer, *Two Saxon Chronicles Parallel*, Oxford, 1892, p. 119); *die Pentecostes* (Roger of Wendover, op. et ed. citt., p. 414; Florence of Worcester, op. et ed. citt., p. 142), etc.

[31] Stenton, op. et ed. citt., p. 370.

[32] D. Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, i (London, 1955), p. 258 and the introductory note on p. 255.

special relationship the one to the other, but also that Roger has sought, not all that skilfully, to alter Florence of Worcester's ordering of a number of events in an attempt to bring back into the primary narrative matter which originally formed part of a posthumous review of the achievements of the reign as a whole. That the adoption of the year 973 as that of the great recoinage happens also to fit in so very neatly with a sexennial cycle which published work already has picked up at 979, 991, 997, 1003, and 1009 is not primarily an argument that Eadgar reformed the coinage in that year, but is simply another link in the chain of reasoning that the sequence of coin-types over the last quarter of the tenth century was in fact sexennial. On purely historical grounds 973 might very well be the student's preferred date for Eadgar's monetary reform, even if the duration of the subsequent issues should one day be demonstrated to be quinquennial, septennial, or even quite irregular.

The actual coins, however, may be thought to clinch the matter. The relative paucity of surviving specimens gives a very false impression of the scale on which the new pennies must have been struck. Recently from Sweden, Mr. Kenneth Jonsson, has subjected the so-called *reform* coins of Eadgar (Hildebrand C.2 = *BMC* vi = Brooke 6 = North 752 = Seaby 660) to minute scrutiny,[33] and it is perfectly obvious that the coins we do have represent no more than an infinitesimal sample of a coinage struck over an appreciable period and in substantial quantity. To cram the issue of these pieces into a period occupying only weeks or even months is to do integral violence to the internal evidence which they provide. Particularly telling in this context is the fact that coins with identical readings may prove to be from different dies, while considerable food for thought is furnished by a find from Laugharne in south Wales composed, or so it would seem, exclusively of these *reform* coins in Eadgar's name.[34] When in 979/80 Viking attacks upon England were resumed after an interval of more than two generations,[35] these *reform* coins, and pieces from the same issue in the names of Edward the Martyr and of the young Æthelræd II, already were in process of demonetization, a sufficient explanation of their extreme rarity in Scandinavian hoards, and just one more reason why those students of the later Anglo-Saxon coinage who have troubled to work systematically through the Swedish material are so reluctant to believe that in England an obsolete penny could remain legal tender after the expiry of a period of grace measured at most in months.

It can be said with some emphasis, then, that Eadgar's surviving *reform* coins fit as easily into the framework that depends on the recoinage having taken place in 973, the year of Kenneth's submission, as they would sit awkwardly in any arrangement which would have them begin as well as end during the first seven months of 975. It might be further remarked that the not improbable future discovery in these islands of a major hoard including *reform* coins in quantity would by no means embarrass the numismatist preferring the authority of Roger's source to that of Roger himself, but might very well cast further doubt on the plausibility of a pattern forcing into a period of at most a few months a coinage where virtually every new find throws up new dies—and very often new moneyers and even new mints as well. The point is made perfectly by the most recent find from Gotland with its broken penny of Barnstaple, a mint unpublished not just for the *reform* type but also for the reign.[36] When exactly in 973

[33] Cf. *NNÅ* 1975/6, p. 76 n. 9.
[34] *BNJ* XXIX, ii (1959), 255–8.
[35] Stenton, op. et ed. citt., pp. 374–5.
[36] *NNÅ*, vol. et pag. citt., no. 215.

the new coinage may be supposed to have been introduced is, of course, quite another question, but the late summer or early autumn must seem as likely a time as any, and especially now that it has been suggested that the largesse distributed in the context of the coronation of 11 May most probably took the form of the pennies of the immediately preceding *circumscription* type (Hildebrand B = *BMC* iii = Brooke 3 = North 749 = Seaby 655).[37]

What this note has sought to show is that the 973 date for Eadgar's monetary reform is not, as has been implied, a numismatic ingenuity conjured up to fit in with preconceived orderings of what was clearly a highly managed currency, but is positively demanded by the 'eodem quoque tempore' of our one literary source. As it happens, the 973 dating accords perfectly with the sexennial type-cycle which has been postulated on the basis of a mass of hoard-evidence, much of it unpublished but readily accessible to serious inquirers, and of such striking historical 'coincidences' as the transfer of the Wilton mint to Salisbury between the Long Cross and Helmet emissions,[38] or Oxford's interruption of coinage within months of the inception of Last Small Cross,[39] but all such evidence at this stage is perhaps best regarded as no more than corroboratory. Acceptance of 973 as the date of the reform does have as one corollary, however, a parallel acceptance of the hypothesis that Eadgar's advisers from the first envisaged regular change of type, and that the whole system worked more or less smoothly from the very outset, but it is not easy to understand why this should not have been the case. It was not the first time that an English king had experimented with periodic recoinage, and at Eadgar's court there would have been not a few elder statesmen who in their youth would have conversed with greybeards familiar with a very similar system introduced under Æthelwulf and not dismantled until quite late in the reign of Ælfred the Great.[40] Within the last few years, too, an Austrian numismatist, Dr. Wolfgang Hahn, has demonstrated conclusively that some comparable periodic or cyclic concept exists in certain Byzantine coinages of the sixth century.[41] Clearly the idea was not entirely novel, and in the same way the initial success of Eadgar's application would go a long way towards meeting the objection that the legislation of his successors ignores so completely the new departure. In fact the numismatic content of this legislation is relatively exiguous where it is not ambiguous into the bargain, and it may be submitted that we have no right to expect comment upon the obvious or the familiar. If the system was working smoothly—and all the numismatic evidence suggests that this was indeed the case—there would be little point in the reiteration *ad nauseam* of provisions which we may suppose to have been laid down once and for all in an initial ukase or rescript embodied in a lost code of Eadgar's which, whether we favour for the recoinage 973 or 975 (or even 974!), must surely have once existed. Notoriously, too, those laws of Eadgar which have survived, and they are not numerous, have usually been dated to the early part of the reign, though already noted has been one significant exception.[42]

It follows that the silence of post-Eadgar codes may be adduced with at least equal propriety as an argument for, rather than against, the cyclic concept, and so as an

[37] *SCMB* 1973, pp. 156–9.
[38] Supra, p. 1 n. 1.
[39] *BNJ* XXXV (1966), 34–7.
[40] Cf. my forthcoming note in the Philip Grierson *Festschrift*.
[41] W. Hahn, *Moneta Imperii Byzantini*, i (Vienna, 1973), cf. *SNC* 1974, pp. 14 and 15.
[42] *Supra*, p. 5 n. 22.

indication perhaps of the system's early acceptance as an integral part of the late Saxon way of life. Certainly a model sermon composed in Æthelræd's heyday assumes the congregation's familiarity with successive changes of coin-type within a particular reign.[43] The principle of one type of coin, and one only, being in currency at a given time, and for a given period, is one so childishly simple that we need not suppose that the message had continually to be drummed home, and, to revert to an earlier observation, there has been a tendency to attach far too little significance to the very different composition of hoards from England concealed under Æthelræd II and Cnut, and finds of the same period which have come to light in Scandinavia. Reiterated legislation will be found as a rule to reflect persistence in abuse, and the English material is eloquent that, except for a few weeks at the inception of a new issue, coins in currency were of no more than one type. Moreover, and this too is something that is very easily overlooked, the fact that the later Anglo-Saxon penny seems to have been very substantially over-valued—i.e. contained very much less than a pennyworth of silver—would greatly have facilitated general acceptance of the new system inasmuch as the demonetized penny would normally have contained silver to nothing like the face value of its successor.[44] Thus there would have been a very strong incentive for every holder of obsolescent coin to bring it into the exchanges whenever a new coin was proclaimed, and it was only when the precious metal content became suspect in the last quarter of a century or so of the Anglo-Saxon period that we begin to find speculative hoarding of coins of different issues.[45] Even here, too, we would be well advised to draw a distinction between hoards put down by private individuals and those evidencing a possible link with a coining authority. Once money had passed out of private possession into that of officers of the Crown it became, for all practical purposes, bullion and not specie, and there would be no compelling reason for it to be subjected to the minting-process until such time as the Crown wished to return it—at a considerable profit—to the private sector once more. The hypothesis remains attractive that the Sedlescombe hoard, for example, represents part, if not all, of the bullion reserves of the Hastings mint brought inland and buried as Duke William's skirmishers were busily establishing a bridgehead in depth.[46]

As already remarked, one strength of the theory of a sexennial type-cycle obtaining—with one interruption occasioned by the crisis of *c.* 1015–18—over the reigns of Edward the Martyr, Æthelræd II, Eadmund Ironside, and Cnut, must be the fact that all attempts to propose positive alternatives have foundered on the twin reefs of the Hiberno-Norse and Norwegian imitations.[47] It is encouraging, too, that further arguments continue to be available in support of the arrangement proposed. To take just one example, it does not appear to have been remarked by critics of the sexennial cycle that one of the real rarities of the coinage of Æthelræd II is a Crux (Hildebrand

[43] *A/S Coins*, pp. 188–94.

[44] H. B. A. Petersson, *Anglo-Saxon Currency* (Lund, 1969), *passim*.

[45] *Supra*, p. 1 n. 5.

[46] Note particularly the alleged nature of the containers—leather and metal instead of pottery.

[47] Olafr Tryggvason's departure from England was not until after Easter 995, and there is a certain amount of evidence that his leisurely progress may have taken in Dublin and the Isle of Man. His Norwegian coins, however, are of Crux type (K. Skaare, *Coins and Coinage in Viking-age Norway*, Oslo–Bergen–Tromso, 1976, pp. 58–60), and current thinking on the date of the closely linked Danish issue in the name of Svend Tveskaeg (*NNUM* 1979, iv (May), pp. 61–5) generally bears out the view that the Norwegian evidence in itself is sufficient to dispose of the suggestion (*BNJ* xxxix (1970), 200) that Long Cross may have been instituted as early as 994.

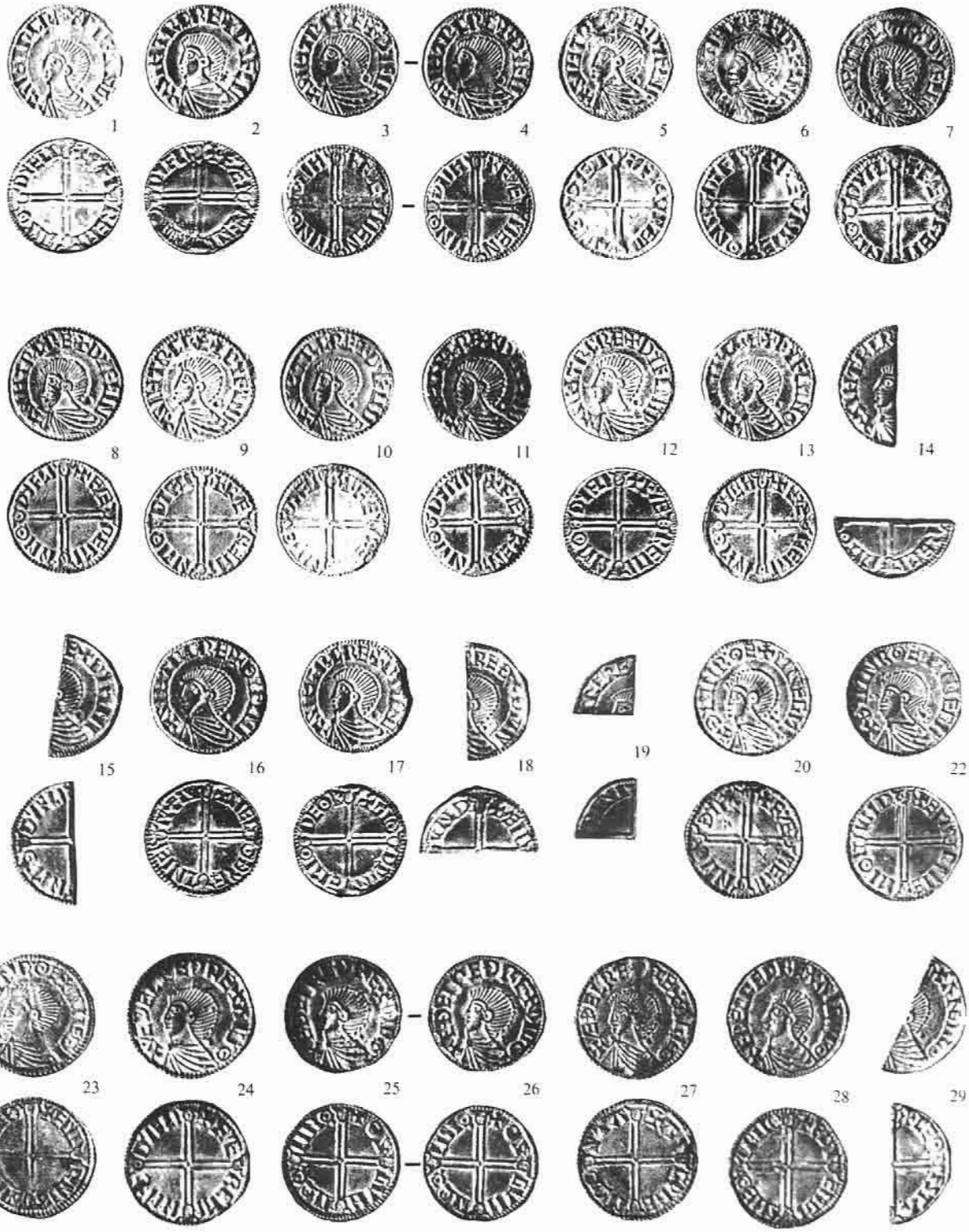
C = *BMC* iii = Brooke 3 = North 770 = Seaby 667) but not a First Hand (Hildebrand B. 1 = *BMC* iia = Brooke 2 = North 766 = Seaby 664) penny of the mint of Derby, a most curious inversion of the normal order of things.[48] The orthodox sexennialist has little difficulty in taking this in his stride; in 985, just at the time that he would date the demonetization of First Hand, there was obviously major unrest in Mercia with a situation culminating in *ealdorman* Ælfric's banishment.[49] Those suspicious of the sexennial concept, on the other hand, cannot continue to ignore the fact that some explanation surely is required for the paucity of Crux coins from a mint otherwise of consistent importance throughout the late Anglo-Saxon period.

It has not been the aim of this note, however, to attempt to defend over the whole field, still less by numismatic argument, the reconstruction of the essential pattern of the later Anglo-Saxon coinage which has been pieced together and put forward during the last three decades. What has been attempted is a sustained refutation of the particular objection that acceptance of 973 as the year of Eadgar's great reform is tantamount to rejection of the totality of the literary evidence. Charges to this effect are, it has been argued here, not merely unjust but quite ill founded. The student who takes 973 as his point of departure is far from brushing aside impatiently the inconvenient chronological assertions of a thirteenth-century chronicler. Instead, he is no more than making legitimate use of his powers of historical criticism when he finds himself confronted with a text which contains inherent contradictions not one whit the less discrepant and disturbing for not being immediately visible. In contrast, those numismatists who would insist that we follow the letter of Roger's text, and date Eadgar's monetary reform to 975, not only trample roughshod over the testimony of the actual coins, but have either to reject the accepted dating for Kenneth's homage or to dismiss as meaningless the one positive chronological indication in Roger's narrative which may well derive from his lost tenth- or eleventh-century source, the all-critical formula 'eodem quoque tempore'. Criticism should never be selective, and one may fairly ask why priority should be given to the 'eodem anno' which appears to be a gloss by a Roger floundering in an attempt to incorporate into his primary narrative Florence's posthumous panegyric, and which certainly conflicts with the testimony of the surviving coins, when there has been universal if usually tacit rejection of his claim in the succeeding sentence that it was in 975, and not in 973, that Lothian was ceded to the Scottish king.[50]

[48] Cf. B. E. Hildebrand, *Anglosachsiska Mynt*, 2nd edn. (Stockholm, 1881), where there are listed (p. 48) eight First Hand pennies, none of Second Hand, and one of Crux. A similar position obtains at Copenhagen with two First Hand pennies and none of Second Hand or Crux (*SCBI* Copenhagen ii, pl. 6).

[49] *ASC* s.a. 985, cf. Whitelock *et al.*, p. 81, while most recently the date is endorsed by P. Stafford (D. Hill ed., *Ethelred the Unready*, Oxford, 1978).

[50] Substantially this note was written a whole indiction ago, and a special word of thanks is due to Mrs. K. F. Morrison not just for a kindness then but because she probably understands as well as anyone the personal pressures that explain its non-appearance until now. My indebtedness to Mr. C. E. Blunt, Dr. D. M. Metcalf, Dr. J. L. Nelson, and Professor Dorothy Whitelock for detailed and constructive comment on earlier drafts is very considerable, but it is only fair to say that responsibility for the views now expressed attaches to the writer alone.



BLACKBURN AND DOLLEY: LIST HOARD