




LONDON STEREOSCOPIC CO.

THE GOLD MANCUS OF OFFA, KING OF MERCIA, FIGURE 1,  
AND COINS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE SUBJECT.

## THE GOLD MANCUS OF OFFA, KING OF MERCIA.

By P. W. P. CARLYON-BRITTON, F.S.A., *President*.

 HIS unique and most interesting gold coin was first described by M. Adrien de Longpérier in a paper dated at Paris June 8th, 1841, read before the Numismatic Society on November 25th of the same year and printed in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. iv, pp. 232-234. An excellent woodcut illustration is at the head of the article. The coin is also fully described in Kenyon's *Gold Coins of England*, 1884, pp. 11 and 12, and is illustrated in the frontispiece to that work, Fig. 13.

From M. de Longpérier's account it appears that this remarkable coin was procured by the Duke de Blacas, then lately deceased, during a sojourn at Rome. It passed into the collection of the present writer in the early part of 1907, by purchase from MM. Rollin and Feuardent.

The Arabic legends on the coin transcribed into Roman characters and including the Anglo-Saxon OFFA REX, inverted, are as follows :—

<i>Obverse :—</i>	LA ILAHA ILLA AĻLAHO
<i>Field :—</i>	ALLAH WAHIDO LA SHAREEKA LAHO
<i>Margin :—</i>	MOHAMMADON RASOOLO LLAHI ARSALAHO BILHADA WADINI AL HAKKI LIOTHHIRAHO ALA ADDINI COLLIHI
<i>Reverse :—</i>	MOHAMMADON
<i>Field :—</i>	REX RASOOLO OFFA LLAHI
<i>Margin :—</i>	BISMI ALLAHI DHARABA HADZA EDDEENAR SANATA SEBA'WA KHAMSEEN WA MEEYAH

The translation of these legends is as follows :—

Obverse field :—

*There is no other God but the one God. He has no equal.*

Margin :—

*Mahommad is the Apostle of God, who sent him with the doctrine and true faith to prevail over every religion.*

Reverse field :—

*Mahommad is the Apostle of God.*

Margin :—

*In the name of God was coined this dinar in the year one hundred and fifty-seven.*

Between the three lines forming the inscription of the field of the reverse are the words OFFA REX. It is the addition of these two words which gives to the coin its importance. They are in the form of the Roman character usually appearing on the silver coins of Offa, but, in relation to the Arabic inscription, are inverted. See Plate I, Fig. 1.

The Mahommadan date 157 inscribed on the coin, corresponds with the year of our Lord 774, to be more exact the last day of Hejira 157 = November 11th, A.D. 774.

The weight of the piece under consideration is 66 grains, being the equivalent in value to a gold mancus, which was worth one-eighth of a pound, or thirty silver pence.

It is a copy of a Mussulman dinar by a workman unacquainted with the Arabic language and writing, but it may be justly said that it is a remarkably good copy.

One of the Vice-Presidents of the Society, Lord Grantley, F.S.A., to whom the coin was submitted for examination, has kindly made a careful comparison of the legends with those appearing on a specimen of the ordinary dinar of the year 157 issued by El-Mansoor. This dinar from Lord Grantley's collection forms Fig. 2 of the Plate. It is somewhat worn and weighs 62 grains, and is, therefore, 4 grains short of the full weight. We cannot do better than quote the following extract from our learned Vice-President's report :—

In reference to your query as to whether I think the dinar of Offa Rex was the work of an Anglo-Saxon craftsman or a Moor, I send you a drawing of the legends on the coins (the mancus and the dinar), which I have copied as faithfully as I can. As far as concerns

## Dinar "Offa Rex" Obverse margin

محمد	ابن	الاسلم	والله	دانا	الاسلم	سنة	الاسلم	له
Dinar of year. 157. Obverse margin.								
محمد	سنة	الله	ادسنة	تاليد	و	لله	لله	الله

Dinar "Offa Rex"

Dinar of year 157

Obverse Field

الله	الله
الله	الله
الله	الله
الله	الله

## Dinar of Offa Rex "Reverse margin.

الله	الله	الله	الله	الله	الله
Dinar of year 157 Reverse margin					
الله	الله	الله	الله	الله	الله

Dinar "Offa Rex".

Dinar of year 157

Reverse Field.

الله	الله
الله	الله
الله	الله

the Kalima, or legends, on the fields of *obverse* and *reverse* there is nothing that denotes an unorthodox worker, except a slight slovenliness, which is more general at a later age than at this period. On the *obverse* margin, however, there are one or two words which one can hardly believe the die cutter could have understood, e.g., *Mohammadon*; *rasoolo* (one tooth of *Sin* wanting); *liothhiraho*, quite incorrect. Also on the *reverse* margin the word *Sanata* is a mere blur.

On the whole, I believe that the cutter of the die did not understand the Arabic meaning of the Koofee legend, and simply copied it; though how he did it so well I am at a loss to account for. It is a significant fact that the Roman letters "OFFA REX" are upside down in relation to the Koofee words: I congratulate you on the acquisition of so interesting a coin.

The drawings of the legends referred to above are reproduced on the accompanying Plate.

In the catalogue of coins of the Eastern Khalifeehs in the British Museum, vol. i, p. 39, No. 24, a dinar of El-Mansoor of the year 157 A. H., and of the weight of 66·5 grains is recorded. See Plate, Fig. 3. To the description is appended the following note:—

This last coin is remarkable for many inaccuracies in its inscriptions (pointed out by Marsden, *Num. Orient.*, i, pp. 20, 21) which lead to the belief that it was the work of an artist ignorant of the Arabic character. There seems to be no reason for believing the coin to be a modern forgery.

We may add that the likelihood of the coin being either a contemporary or ancient forgery is also precluded by the fact that it is of full weight, and of gold of the proper standard. May not this be of the same origin as the coin we are discussing, and prepared for the same purpose?

Having recounted the history and provenance of the "Offa Rex" gold coin and described its legends, type, and workmanship, we will proceed to a consideration of the term "mancus" and its application to coins or values of both gold and silver in Anglo-Saxon muniments.

The value which was expressed by the gold mancus is recorded by Archbishop Ælfric, who wrote about the end of the tenth century.<sup>1</sup> It was then equal to thirty pennies, or six shillings, at which rate it

Sax. Grammar, by Ælfric. He was Archbishop of Canterbury from A.D. 995 to 1005.

continued to be estimated in the laws of Henry I. (Liebermann's *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen, Leges Henrici*, 34, 3, and 69, 2).

Ruding, writing in the year 1819, says :—

The term Mancus, or, as it was written by the Saxons, Mancoꝝ Mancꝝ, Mancuꝝ, and Mancure, is supposed to have been derived from Italy, and to be formed from the Latin<sup>1</sup> *manu cusum*, by which it was intended to express coined money, as the word *cusus* could have no reference to simple weight. If this supposition be correct (and the connection which existed between that country and England, after the conversion of the Saxons to Christianity, is sufficient to warrant it), it can scarcely be supposed that the coins themselves were not imported as well as the name, and became current among the Saxons, in the same manner as they appear to have circulated through most of the other nations of Europe. This is much more probable than the opinion that such coins were struck in the Anglo-Saxon mints, of which no evidence has yet been discovered. It should seem, however, that this species of money soon fell into disuse, whilst the name only was retained, and applied to a certain weight. That this was the case may be concluded from the occurrence at an early period of mancuses of silver as well as of gold; for it never was pretended that a silver coin existed under that denomination, even by those who have been the most strenuous advocates for the golden mancus of the Saxons. When, therefore, we find in the ninth century mancuses of silver described precisely in the same manner as those of gold we must either consider the silver mancus as a coin, which it is allowed on all hands that it never was, or we must admit that by the mancus of gold a certain weight only was intended at that time.

This passage is repeated verbatim in the third edition of Ruding's work, published in 1840, vol. i, p. 111, a date prior to the writing of M. de Longpérier's paper above referred to.

Mr. J. Y. Akerman in a paper entitled "The Gold Mancus," read before the Numismatic Society, March 24th, 1842, and printed in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. v, pp. 122–124, quotes the following remarks from a letter addressed to him by M. de Longpérier :—

I have hazarded the supposition that this coin of Offa represents the long sought for *mancus*, but I neglected to set forth my principal

<sup>1</sup> As *nūmus* is masculine, the words should be *manū cusus*. Moreover *manū* has long *ū*, and Ruding ought to have known better than to suggest that *mancusa* could come from *manūcūsus*.

argument in support of the opinion. It appears to me that the name as well as the coin itself is derived from the Arabic, since the word *Mancush* signifies generally a coin, whether of gold, silver, or copper.

The verb *nakasha* (*sic*) is rendered in Freytag's Dictionary *cudit nummos*, and the passive participle is *mankoush*.

Mr. Akerman, after quoting in part the words of Ruding above set out, continues :—" It is singular that he goes on to remark on the probability of the coin as well as the name being imported, without suspecting their Arabic origin."

He then mentions that the weight of the gold penny of Henry III. was a little over 45 grains, that it was current for twenty pence, its value being subsequently raised to twenty-four pence, and concludes that as the weight of the gold Arabic dinar is about 66 grains, or one-third more than that of the gold penny, all doubt is set at rest as to the correctness of M. de Longpérier's conjecture that the Arabic coin with the name of Offa is really a specimen of the long sought for *mancus*.

It is to be noted that Mr. Kenyon in his *Gold Coins of England* agrees with the main conclusions of M. de Longpérier and Mr. Akerman in regard to this piece.

As regards the silver mancus, bearing in mind the fact that the Arabic word *mancush* signifies *a coin*, it may very reasonably be supposed that by a silver mancus the Anglo-Saxons referred to the Arabic silver coin known to us as a *dirhem*, but, unfortunately, the Anglo-Saxon equivalent to a silver mancus is not recorded. It may, however, be argued with reasonable certainty that "a mancus of silver" would imply silver to the value or weight of thirty silver pennies, whereas "a silver mancus" might equally be held to imply the actual coin known to us as a *dirhem*, as the weight of this coin is about 45 grains, and 15 dirhems would, in weight of silver, be equal to thirty pennies, the ascertained value of the gold mancus. So that although each separate dirhem might with propriety have been termed "a silver mancus," a "mancus of silver" would be the term properly applied to the aggregate value of fifteen of such pieces.

In reference to Ruding's point that a mancus of gold, or a gold mancus, must necessarily imply a term of account for reckoning



purposes, while conceding that the term was frequently so employed, it is evident that it had reference to an actual coin known to, and circulated freely amongst the Anglo-Saxons, namely, the Arabic dinar, or gold mancus. If we speak to-day of "a sovereign" or of "half-a-crown" we do not necessarily mean the well-known pieces of money of those precise values; we may equally intend coins which, taken together, are of those values, yet the application of the terms "sovereign" and "half-a-crown" to ascertained values does not prove, as Ruding would have us believe in similar circumstances, the non-existence of such pieces of actual money.

A distinction should be drawn between "a gold mancus" and "a mancus of gold." The former expression was used, no doubt, to denote the actual coin, the latter the value in account. A "golden guinea" can only refer to the now disused coin of that metal and denomination. A "guinea" means to-day twenty-one shillings in account.

Mr. Hawkins in his "Account of Coins and Treasure found in Cuerdale," near Preston, in Lancashire, in May, 1840, read before the Numismatic Society, November 25th and December 23rd, 1841, and printed in the *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. v, records at p. 94 that amongst this treasure of ornaments and coins were some silver pieces of Cufic money of the Khalifeehs of the Abbasside Dynasty. They were chiefly fragments, very few entire, and only one or two in such condition as to allow of the date or mint being ascertained. One only, the least imperfect of the number, is engraved, Plate X, No. 140. Our author continues :—

This is a dirhem of Motamed Ala'llah. The inscription on one side contains the name of this Khalif and that of "Muhammad, the Apostle of God." The legend is partially obliterated and indistinct. On the other side is the inscription "There is no God but God, there is no associate to him"; below is the name of the Khalif's brother, Muwakkef Billah. The legend announces that this coin was struck in Arminiyah, A.H. 267, that is 880 of our era. Other coins, upon which dates can be ascertained, were struck much about the same time, as might be expected from the date of the European coins with which they were mingled. This discovery of Arabic money in the midst of European treasure belonging to the *ninth*<sup>1</sup> century is not unusual, and

<sup>1</sup> This should be *tenth*.



it is not difficult to account for. Such have been found in France and the north of Europe, but not before, it is thought, in England (*Revue Numismatique*, 373, from the *Blätter für Münzkunde*); Charlemagne and his successors are known to have entertained friendly relations with Haroun Alraschid and his successors (Reinaud, *Invas. des Sarras.*, 116, 136); monasteries or hospitals were maintained at Jerusalem for the reception of devotees and entertainment of pilgrims; commercial intercourse existed between Alexandria and various parts of France for the introduction of spices and perfumes (de Guignes, "Mémoire de Commerce des François dans le Levant avant les Croisades," *Acad. des Inscript.*, xxxvii, 481); the Saracens had actually a settlement in Provence (Reinaud, *ibid.*, 158, 210, 257); intercourse between Europe and the East was also carried on through Russia (Lindberg, "Sur quelques médailles Cufiques trouvées dans l'île de Falster," *Dédication*, pp. 3-6); and a naval predatory warfare was frequently practised by the northern tribes of Europe against the Moors (Depping, *Histoire des Expéditions maritimes des Normands*, i, 164-5).

From these facts Mr. Hawkins draws the conclusion that the Cufic pieces found at Cuerdale may have found their way into the hoard either through France, or by means of the Northern warriors, whose custom it was to fight against the Moors.

Other finds of Cufic coins in Great Britain and Ireland have since been recorded. At Eastbourne, Sussex, a dinar of Hesham ben abd-el Malek, the eleventh Omiya Khalifeeh of the house of Omar, who reigned A.D. 724-743, and another Cufic coin, not described, see *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. ix, p. 85. At Arundel, Sussex, in Sweden, and on the shores of the Baltic; *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. xiii, p. 14. At Goldborough, Yorkshire, thirty-five Oriental and two Saxon; *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. i, N.S., pp. 65-71. At Lugga, County Meath, Ireland; *Numismatic Chronicle*, vol. iii, N.S., p. 256.

There have been other finds of the same character, but reference to those mentioned is sufficient to illustrate the fact that both gold and silver Arabic and Moorish pieces were freely circulated in this country in Anglo-Saxon times. Mr. Joseph Anderson in his edition of *The Orkneyinga Saga*, 1873, p. 127, appends the following note:—

Hoards of Eastern coins and ornaments are almost annually discovered in Norway and Sweden, and occasionally in Orkney and the

North of Scotland. The museum of Stockholm possesses more than 20,000 Cufic coins found in Sweden, dating from the close of the eighth to the end of the tenth century, and vast quantities of those silver ornaments of peculiar forms and style of workmanship, which are also believed to have been brought from the East, partly by trade and partly by the returning Værings (of the Varangian guard at Constantinople).

The find at Goldborough is rendered very interesting and instructive by the circumstance that it comprised a cut half of what is described in the *British Museum Catalogue*, vol. ii, p. 55, as an "offering penny" of Ælfred the Great. The illustration, Plate V, 15, makes it clear that it is an intentionally cut half of a coin and not a "fragment," as it is described in the catalogue. The probability of the so-called "offering pennies" being in fact shillings of Wessex, equal to fivepence, was shown by the present writer in the Introduction to vol. i of *The British Numismatic Journal*, p. 4. In Mercia, however, the shilling equalled fourpence, and sixty silver shillings were equivalent to one libra, or pound.

The presence of this dimidiated specimen, which is here illustrated as Fig. 7 in the Plate, in a hoard, comprising also a penny of Eadweard the Elder, and thirty-five dirhems of the Abbasside and Samanian Dynasties, A.H. 276 to A.H. 320, or A.D. 889 to A.D. 932, suggests the likelihood of the idea which originated Ælfred's shillings having been derived from the Arabic dirhem, which, after allowing for the difference between Arabic and Roman inscriptions, they much resemble in size and general appearance.

The only other specimen of Ælfred's large silver coinage, also in the national collection, is illustrated in the Plate, Fig. 6.

Its weight is 162·4 grains and, although similar in type, is struck from different dies on both obverse and reverse from those employed in the production of the dimidiated example.

It has been conjectured that the heavier piece may have been a pattern only, as the metal extends considerably beyond the outer circle of the design, whereas the cut piece has no metal beyond the outer circle. If a current coin its weight approximates to seven and a half pence, or one and a half shillings of Wessex.

Two specimens from the writer's collection of dirhems of El-Mansoor, struck in A.H. 157, the same year as that upon the gold mancus of OFFA REX are illustrated in the Plate, Figs. 4, 5. They weigh 45 and 43 grains respectively, whereas the cut half of Ælfred's large silver coin found at Goldborough weighs 53 grains. It would seem, therefore, that one Wessex shilling was approximately equal to two dirhems and a half.

We will now pass on to the consideration of the circumstances in which Offa would have been likely to issue a gold mancus bearing his own name and title.

Offa's reign over Mercia began in A.D. 757 and continued until 796.

The date inscribed upon the gold coin bearing his name is A.H. 157=A.D. 774, but as this piece is a copy of an Arabic dinar of the year A.H. 157, that date is also copied, and all that it proves is that Offa's piece was issued in, or more probably, subsequently to the year A.D. 774.

It is known that Offa associated his son Ecgrith with him as joint king of the Mercians, and that this was effected at the Synod held at Cealchyth in A.D. 786. Ecgrith reigned for 141 days after the death of his father.

There is a charter of A.D. 788 signed by Offa and Ecgrith, each of whom writes *rex Merciorum* after his signature, Birch's *Cartularium Saxonicum*, No. 253; whereas in a charter, No. 251, assigned to the year A.D. 787, Offa signs as *rex* and Ecgrith merely as *filius regis*.

It is clear that the arrangement was arrived at when the Legates George and Theophylact visited Offa. Their report to Pope Adrian I., attributed to A.D. 787, is printed in Birch's *Cart. Sax.*, No. 250. Certain it is that in a letter, *Cart. Sax.*, No. 288, of Pope Leo III., attributed to the year A.D. 798, to Coenwulf, King of the Mercians, reference is made to Ecgrith in the passage, *Signiferum, et comitem in ipso regno . . . amplexens coram synodo*.

In the same document there is direct reference to the vow made by Offa to Pope Adrian I., through the Legates George and Theophylact, to send yearly 365 mancuses to the Pope, or Church of St. Peter,

as alms for the poor, a promise which Pope Leo desired to have renewed by Offa's successor. The following extract gives the text of the letter on this subject :—

“Nam pro hujusmodi regi[mine] valde nimisque beatificavimus et laudavimus fratrem nostrum præfatum archiepiscopum (<sup>1</sup>Aedelheardum) : quia pro fide orthodoxa animam suam posuit. Vestram autem scientes fructificatam in omnibus bonis precelsa scientia ad memoriam deducimus, qualiter sanctae recordationis quod Offa rex pro <sup>2</sup>victoria regni, quam tenuit, beato Petro auctori suo signiferum et comitem in ipso regno utens atque amplectens, coram synodo tam omnibus episcopis seu principibus atque optimatibus cunctoque populo insulæ Bryttanniæ morantibus quamque et nostri fidelissimi missi<sup>3</sup> Georgii et Theophylacti [*sic*], sanctissimis episcopis, votum vovit eidem Dei apostolo beato Petro clavigero regni cœlorum ut per unumquemque annum scilicet quantos dies annus habuerit, tantos mancuses eidem Dei apostolo aecclesiæ nimirum trecentos sexaginta quinque pro alimoniis pauperum et luminarium concinnatione emittere, quod et fecit: ut tam ipse quamque posterius ejus qui (in) ipso regno, tenere videntur usque in perpetuo propter ejusdem regni victorias beato Petro suis almis suffragiis concedente. Et si vestra excellentia ampliores victorias et honores in ipso habere regno cupit, instar persolvens, per eam amplius quam amplius in perpetuum permaneat confirmatum ut ipse Dei apostolus semper per vos in ipso victoriam concedat regno, et in vita æterna cum sanctis omnibus sine fine vos regnare faciat.”

Some important corrections of the text, as printed by Birch, have been suggested by Mr. Alfred Anscombe, to whom we are also indebted for the following translation :—

“For we have much and greatly praised our before mentioned brother, the Archbishop (Aethelheard), on account of statesmanship (regi[mine]) of this sort, and we have declared him blessed because he expended his life for the orthodox faith. On the other hand, to your mind, which has been rendered fruitful in all good things by the highest wisdom, we recall known facts, namely, how King Offa of venerable memory, employing the blessed Peter for his counsellor, and on account of the conquest of the kingdom that he made, embraced his standard-

<sup>1</sup> Archbishop of Canterbury from A.D. 793 to 805.

<sup>2</sup> This probably has reference to Offa's victory over the Kentish men at Otford, see *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, An. 773 (or 774).

<sup>3</sup> Their names should be in the nominative. There is reason for thinking that Gregorius should be substituted for Georgius.

bearer, and his companion in the self-same government, before the synod, and before all the bishops, princes and thanes, and the whole people of the Island of Britain, as well as the right reverend bishops sojourning therein (such as our very trusty messengers George and Theophylact), and made a vow unto the same Apostle of God, the blessed Peter, the keeper of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, to send forth, year by year, without fail, unto the same Apostle of the Church of God, as many mancuses as there are days in the year, to wit, 365, as alms for the poor, and for the manufacture of lights for the Church. So that he, as well as his posterity, appear to rule without intermission on account of the victories of the same government which have been accorded by the kind and favourable recommendation of the blessed Peter. And if your Highness, paying the like amount, desires to have more success and honour in the self-same kingdom, through that payment it may remain secure perpetually in the highest degree, so that the same Apostle of God may ever grant the victory, through you, to the self-same kingdom, and may bring you to reign with all the saints, without end, in life everlasting."

M. de Longpérier was of opinion that Offa's gold coin was copied from some coin brought into Europe by trade, or by the Arabs, who, in A.D. 785, fled from the religious persecutions of the Khalif Hadi; and as to the singular fact of an Arabic legend being selected for a coin to be sent to a Pope, he remarks:—

"We are authorised by the ignorance of the times to suppose that King Offa mistook for mere ornaments, characters which the Pope, on the other hand, would consider Saxon letters."

It seems to us to be unlikely that either the Pope, or so powerful and enlightened a king as Offa of Mercia was, would be ignorant of the circumstance that the characters on a gold mancus, or dinar, were Arabic.

What appears to us to be more likely is, that the class of coin in question was well-known to the Pope and his Legates, as well as to Offa; and that when Offa vowed to send a contribution of 365 mancuses each year to the Roman Church, both he and the Legates, George and Theophylact, had the Arabic dinar actually in view. Assuming that this was so, Offa, according to the superstition of his times, would naturally desire to perform his vow literally, and to accomplish this object he would have the agreed coins produced at his own mint, and

stamped with his own name and title "OFFA REX," so that no question would arise either as to the exact fulfilment of his vow in regard to the species of coin promised, or as to the identity of the sender of the contribution. That Offa did keep his promise we have ample proof in the phrase *quod et fecit* in the papal letter.

It may, indeed, be reasonably surmised that the dinar which was copied was brought to Mercia by one or other of the Legates, and that the coin, the subject of our paper, was struck in the year of the synod, *i.e.*, A.D. 786, or the following year.

Dr. Liebermann accepts the origin of Peter's pence in this grant of Offa, and also describes Malmesbury's reference to Æthelwulf as a confirmation of the grant by the latter king, *Ueber die Leges Edwardi Confessoris*, Halle, 1896, p. 55.

Asser in his *Life of King Alfred* refers to the visit of King Æthelwulf to Rome and to the gifts he made. His words are :—

Romae quoque omni anno magnam pro anima sua pecuniam, id est trecentas mancussas, portari præcepit, quae taliter ibi dividerentur : etc., Ed. W. H. Stevenson, Oxford, 1904, p. 15.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, *annal* 883, records that Sighelm and Æthelstan conveyed to Rome the alms which King Ælfred had vowed to send thither, and also to India to St. Thomas and to St. Bartholomew. Other references to the same subject occur under *annales* 887, 888, 889, 890.

The same authority tells us that in the reign of William Rufus, A.D. 1095, "the Rome-scot" was sent to the Pope by Walter, Bishop of Albano, the Pope's legate, and it is added "which had not been done for many years before."

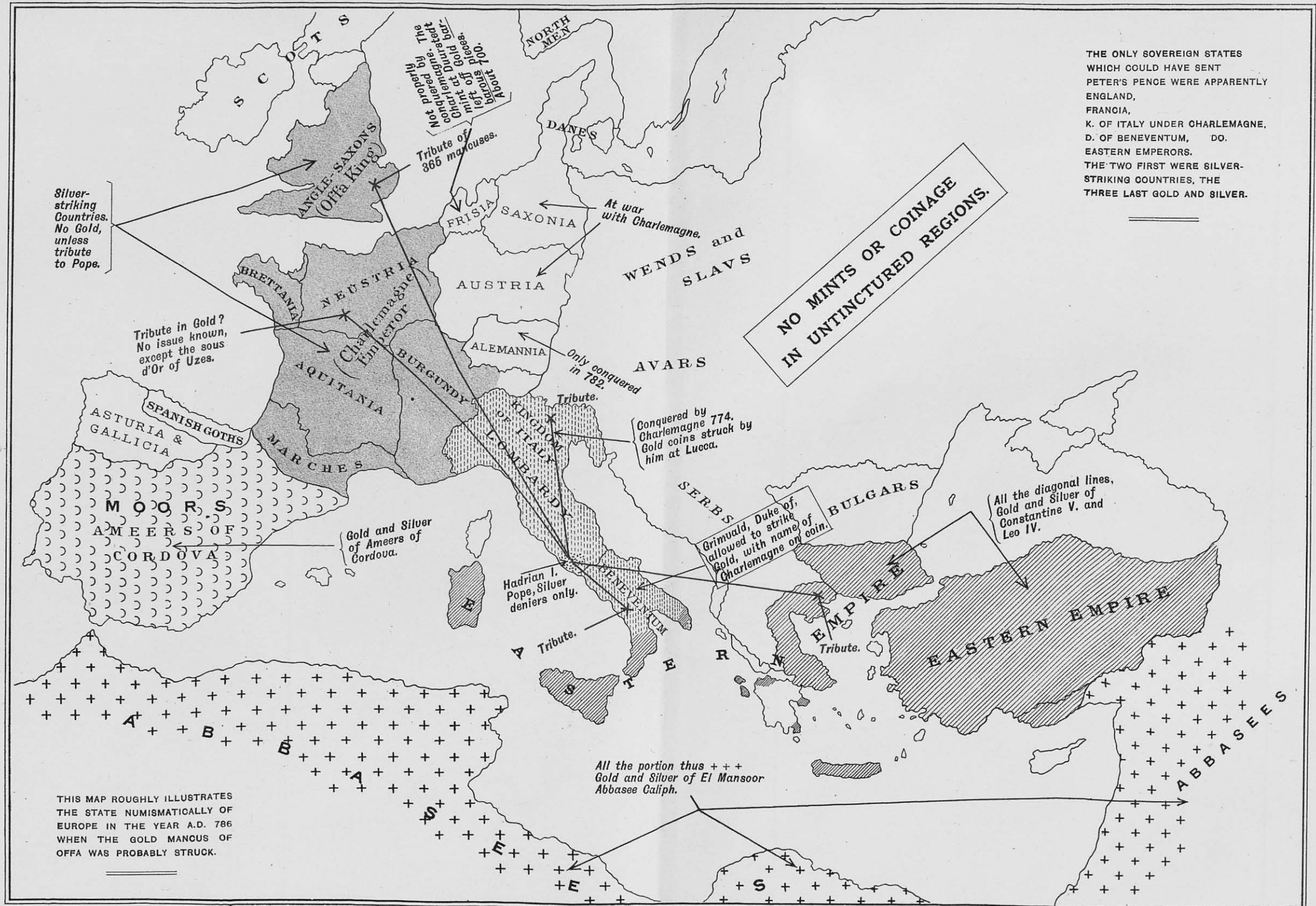
Pope Alexander II., A.D. 1066–1073, had written to William I. that the English used to send a yearly pension to Rome, part of which went to the Pope and part to the Schola Anglorum.<sup>1</sup>

Frequent references to this tribute under the names of Romfeoh, Romescot, Rompening, etc., occur in the laws of the Anglo-Saxons. For particulars, our readers are referred to Dr. Liebermann's learned

<sup>1</sup> Jaffé-Wattenbach, *Regesta Pontificum Romanorum*, No. 4757.



# NUMISMATIC MAP OF EUROPE IN THE TIME OF OFFA.



work already cited. The references in the index thereto are as follows :—*Eadweard-Guthrum*, 6, 1. I. Eadmund, 2 ; II. Eadgar, 40 ; V. Æthelræd II., 11, 1 ; VI. Æthelræd II., 18 ; VIII. Æthelræd II., 10 ; I. Cnut, 9 ; Eadward the Confessor, *f retr* 10 ; Henry I., 11, 3. In the above quoted laws of Eadgar “hearth-penny” is identified with “Rome-penny.”

Mr. Kenyon's conclusion is that both M. de Longpérier and Mr. Akerman were probably right in considering the coin to be a specimen of those sent by Offa to the Pope, in fulfilment of his vow to send him 365 gold mancuses every year, and in support he refers to its having been procured in Rome. He remarks that when the tribute was paid at all, it was probably paid in foreign gold, and that a few pieces of this sort may have been struck to make up a deficiency in such gold payable in some one year.

Lord Grantley favours the view that Offa's gold coin was expressly struck for the payment of tribute to the Pope, and he thinks it to be likely that the gold pieces of the Emperor Charlemagne, sous d'or, struck at Uzes, may have served the same purpose. Also that the gold pieces struck by Grimvald, Duke of Beneventum, under Charlemagne, and those struck by Charlemagne himself at Lucca after its conquest in A.D. 774, are of the same order.

Engel and Serrure in *Num. Moyen Âge*, 1891, p. 221, quote a petition of the Council of Rheims asking the Emperor to revert to Pepin's ways, and to forbid the currency of the gold sous, worth forty deniers.

But Louis le Débonnaire had no scruples about striking sous and half-sous of gold of the *MVNVS DIVINVM* type, more particularly referred to hereafter. These, Lord Grantley believes, were for papal tribute, and, it may be added, that the legend is in itself significant. There were no further gold coins struck in France until the middle of the thirteenth century.

At this period the only sovereign states which could have sent Peter's pence were apparently England, Francia, the Kingdom of Italy under Charlemagne, the Duchy of Beneventum, also under Charlemagne, and the Eastern Empire. The two first were normally only silver striking countries, the three last issuers of both gold and silver.

The map<sup>1</sup> inserted between pages 66 and 67 discloses at a glance the circumstance that Offa, in regard to coined gold money, had practically only the Arabic dinars and the solidi of the Eastern Empire to make choice from, and he appears to have preferred the former.

Another view as to the cause of origin and the intended use of the coin is put forward by Mr. D. H. Haigh in "Notes on the Old English Coinage," *Numismatic Chronicle*, N.S., vol. ix, p. 180. We quote his remarks in full :—

I cannot think that the gold dinar with the name of Offa was ever meant for circulation in England ; nor that a coinage such as this could have been devised for the purpose of payment of the tribute promised to Rome. It could only have been intended for the purposes of commerce with Spain, Africa, or the East ; or for the use of pilgrims to the Holy Land. The latter I think more probable ; and Rome, where it was found, was in the route of all pilgrims.

Mr. Haigh appends the following note :—

It appears, incidentally, from the life of St. Willibald, that pilgrimages to the Holy Land were frequent in the eighth century. He and his companions were arrested at Emesa, and carried before a magistrate, who enquired the object of their journey, and when they explained it to him, said : " I have often seen men of the parts of the earth whence these come, travelling hither they seek no harm, but desire to fulfil their law." This was about A.D. 722. The many years of war which ensued between the Arabs and the Greeks did not put a stop altogether to these pilgrimages, and when peace was restored under Harûn el Rashid, A.D. 786, they became more frequent than ever ; but Offa had been dead seven years before the Keys of the Holy Sepulchre and of the City of Jerusalem were sent to Charlemagne, who founded a hospital there for the reception of pilgrims.

We, on our part, must leave our readers to decide which view should be adopted, giving, however, our own support to that originally expressed by M. de Longpérier.

The stamping of the coin with the name and title of Offa seems to suggest that the issue had a specific object to fulfil, and we feel that the historically recorded vow of the King—to send a specific number of mancuses to Rome—affords the more probable explanation of the matter.

<sup>1</sup> We are indebted to Lord Grantley for the original drawing of this map.—EDS.

Another gold piece, which is in the British Museum, is of the size and weight, 68 grains, of a mancus. This is of Wigmund, Archbishop of York from A.D. 837 to 854, and has on the obverse a full-faced tonsured bust of the Archbishop with legend VIGMVND AREP; reverse a small cross pattée within a wreath, and the legend .MVNVS DIVINVM. It has a hole drilled on each side of the neck, as if for suspension. Plate I, Fig. 8.

There are coins of Louis le Débonnaire, A.D. 814–840, of the same denomination and weight, and with the same type and inscription on the reverse. A specimen from the writer's collection, weighing 67 grains, is illustrated in the Plate, Fig. 9.

We have followed Mr. Kenyon in his reference to these pieces as being of the weight of a mancus. They are also of the weight of the Byzantine solidus, from which they are apparently derived in some degree, both as regards type and weight.

We may, however, with some confidence, conjecture that not only Offa's gold mancus, but also the gold coin of Wigmund and the MVNVS DIVINVM pieces of Louis le Débonnaire were struck for the purpose of paying the Rom-feoh or Peter's Pence. Nay, we may go one step further and conclude that the gold coin of Æthelræd II., struck at Lewes, weight  $51\frac{1}{2}$  grains, and the gold piece of Edward the Confessor, struck at Warwick, weight  $54\frac{1}{4}$  grains, were intended for the like purpose.<sup>1</sup> We have already seen that the tribute was continued during the reigns of those kings and is referred to in their laws.

Mr. Kenyon's conclusion is:—

"The Arabic dinar, however, was clearly not a current coin, and tends strongly to disprove the existence of any native gold currency in Offa's time. Wigmund's piece is probably a medal; and those of Æthelræd and Edward the Confessor appear to have been struck from dies intended for silver pennies, either as pattern pieces or by a mere freak of the moneyer.

"We do not believe that there was any regular Saxon gold coinage later than the trientes."

We confess to a preference for the consistent explanation of the

<sup>1</sup> For descriptions of these two pieces, see Mr. Kenyon's *Gold Coins of England*, pp. 12 and 13, and his Plate, Figs. 15 and 16.

existence of these pieces now given for the first time, namely, that all were made for the purpose of payment of the tribute to Rome, the Romfeoh or Peter's Pence.

In later times there were issued by Christian princes coins having inscriptions partly in Roman and partly in Arabic characters, and some were issued by Crusaders with entirely Arabic inscriptions, but the reasons for the issue of these were foreign to those originating the tribute coins above discussed.

The following five specimens from Lord Grantley's cabinet have been kindly lent by him for illustration.

1. Gold coin of Alfonzo VIII., of Castile, A.D. 1158-1214—

*Obverse—*

*Centre.—*

EL IMAM EL BAY'ATA  
EL MESIAHYATA EL BABA  
ALF

*Margin.—*

BISM EL AB WALIBN WA ERROOH  
ELKADDOOS ALLAHOO WAHIDO MAN  
AMAN WĀ'TAMADA YEKOON  
SĀLMINAN

*Reverse—*

*Centre.—*

AMIR  
EL KATOLIKIN  
ALFONS BIN SANGO  
AYADO ALLAH  
WA NASRUHO

*Margin.—*

DHARAB HADA EL DINAR  
BI MEDINA TOLETO KHAMIS  
THLATEEN WA MAYATEEN WA  
ALF ASSAFAR

Translation of No. 1.

*Obverse—*

*Centre.—*The pontiff of the church of the Messiah, the Pope.

ALF

*Margin.—*In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, one God, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.



Reverse—

*Centre.*—Prince of the Catholics Alfonzo son of Sancho. May God help him and protect him.

*Margin.*—This dinar was struck in the city of Toledo, twelve hundred and thirty-five of (the era of) Assafar.<sup>1</sup> = A.D. 1197.

Weight 60 grains. Plate, Fig. 10.

2. Silver "staurat" drachma struck at St. Jean d'Acre, about A.D. 1251 under Louis IX., A.D. 1251-1259.

Obverse—

ALLAH WAHID HOO  
EL YAMAN WAHID  
WALMA'MOODIYEH

} round a cross pattée.

The cross pattée is enclosed within an inner circle, and the whole of the above is within a square.

Reverse—

EL AB WALIBN  
WA ERROOH EL KADOOS  
ALLAHO WAHID

} in a square.

The margins, obverse and reverse, are obliterated in this coin, but, according to Schlumberger, *Num. de l'Orient Latin*, p. 140 *et seq.*, the obverse margin should be "Struck at Acre the year 1251 of the incarnation of the Messiah," and the reverse, "We are glorified by the cross of our Saviour Jesus the Messiah, from whom we get our grace our life and our resurrection, and by whom we have been saved and pardoned."

These coins (*vide* Schlumberger, *loc. cit.*) were called "staurats," and he says they were struck to calm the anger of Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254), who had objected to Christians using Mahommedan legends on their coins, as except for the meaning, they appeared like the well-known Arab coins of the day. They are much rarer than the gold besants, and were struck between 1251 and 1259.

Translation of No. 2.

*Obverse.*—One God, one faith and baptism.

*Reverse.*—The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, one divinity.

The translations of the margins are given above.

Weight, 40 grains. Plate, Fig. 11.

<sup>1</sup> This era is from 38 B.C., the date of the submission of Spain to the Romans.



3. Gold besant struck by Crusaders at St. Jean d'Acre in A.D. 1251.

*Obverse—*

*Centre.—* ALLAH WAHIDO

*Inner margin.—* EL AB WAL IBN WA

ERROOH EL KADOOS

*Outer margin.—* DHARAB [BI AKĒR SANATA]

ALF WA MĒYATEEN AHAD WA

KHAMSEEN LITAGASSAD EL MESSIAH

*Reverse—*

*Inner margin.—* + : WA HĀYINĀ WA KIĀMTANĀ

WA BIHO TAGALLASNA WA'AFINA

*Outer margin.—* [TEFTIKIR BISALIB] RABNA

IESSU' EL MESSIAH EZZAY [BIHO SALMETNA]

Translation of No. 3.

*Obverse—*

*Centre.—* *There is only one God.*

*Inner margin.—* *The Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost.*

*Outer margin.—* *Struck [at Aker in the year] twelve hundred and fifty-one of the Incarnation of the Messiah.*

*Reverse—*

*Inner margin.—* *And our life and our resurrection and by whom we have been delivered and pardoned.*

*Outer margin.—* *[We are made great by the cross] of our Saviour Jesus the Messiah [by whom we hold our Salvation].*

Weight, 48 grains (clipped and pierced). Plate, Fig. 12.

4. *Gold.*—Early imitation by Crusaders of dinars of El Amir (Fatimee Khalif from A.D. 1101 to 1130) and attributed by Mr. Schlumberger to the regency of Bohemund I. of Antioch under Tancred.

*Obverse.*—Corrupt Arabic legends, B.

*Reverse.*— " " " , T and cross.

Weight, 53 grains. Plate, Fig. 13.

5. *Gold.*—Imitation of a dinar of about the time of Hisham II., A.H. 400–403, independent Amawee Caliph in Spain. Found in Spain.

Corrupt legends on both sides.

Weight, 58 grains (pierced). Plate, Fig. 14.



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—SEE FIGURES 1 AND 3—AND COINS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE SUBJECT.