

Rulers of Jorvik

A critical examination of the contemporary, Anglo-Norman, and
Scandinavian sources pertaining to the rulers of Anglo-Scandinavian York.

Master Thesis for the Research Master Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies

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Conventions

Throughout this thesis, personal names are based on the spelling in Frank M. Stenton's *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edition; Oxford, 1971) where possible. Otherwise, I have aimed to use the most common spelling.

Charters will be referred to as follows: 's.***'. This refers to the number, assigned to them, in: P. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (Royal Historical Society, Guides and Handbooks 8; London, 1968).

Abbreviations

- ASC* *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle D*, in *MS D, A sem-diplomatic edition with introduction and indices*, ed. by G. P. Cubbin (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition, volume 6; Cambridge, 1996). References are to the D version, unless otherwise noted.
- Æthelweard* *Chronicon Æthelweardi*, in *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. by A. Campbell (London, 1962).
- Asser* Asser, *De rebus gestis Ælfredi*, in *Asser's Life of King Alfred together with the Annals of Saint Neot's erroneously ascribed to Asser*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904).
- Chronicon* John of Worcester, *Chronicon ex chronicis*, in *The Chronicle of John of Worcester. Volume II the annals from 450 TO 1066*, edited by R. R. Darlington and P. McGurk, Translated by Jennifer Bray and P. McGurk (Oxford, 1995).
- Egils Saga* *Saga Egil Skallagrimsson*, in *Egils Saga*, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson (Exeter, 2003).
- Flores Historiarum* Roger of Wendover, *Chronica siue flores historiarum*, in Roger of Wendover, *Chronica siue flores historiarum*, annals 867, 872, 873, in *Rerum Anglicarvm scriptores post Bedam præcipui, ex vetvstissimis coicibvs manvscriptis ncnc primvm in lvcem editi*, ed. by Henry Saville (Weastmead, original 1596, reprint 1970).
- Gaimar* Geffrei Gaimar, *L'Estoire des Engleis*, in *Geffrei Gaimar, Estoire des Engleis/History of the English*, ed. and trans. by Ian Short (Oxford, 2009).
- Gesta regum* William of Malmesbury, *De gestis regum Anglorum libri quinque*, in *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings, volume 1*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998)..

- Historia de Cuthberto* *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, in *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, ed. and trans. by Ted Johnson South (Cambridge, 2002).
- HR I/II* *Historia regum I/II*, in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. by Thomas Arnold (volume two; London, 1885), pp. pp. 3-283.
- Libellus* Symeon, *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius hoc est Dunelmensis ecclesie*, in *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, ecclesie, Tract on the Origins and Progress of this the Church of Durham*, ed. and trans. by David Rollason (Oxford, 2000).
- Ragnars saga* *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, in *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by G. Jónsson and Vilhjálmsón (Reykjavik, 1954).
- Saxo Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, in *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*, ed. by J. Olrik and H. Raeder (Copenhagen, 1931).
- Þátttr* *Þátttr af Ragnars sonum*, in *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by G. Jónsson and Vilhjálmsón (Reykjavik, 1954).

Chapter One: Introduction

Anglo-Scandinavian York is an enigma. The reason for this is a discrepancy in the surviving evidence. From 866 until 954, York was part of a Viking kingdom ruled, mostly, by the descendants of Ragnar Lothbrok; the city seems to have been the capital of the Viking kingdom from which power was exercised.¹ Very little is actually known about York during this period, for no contemporary written sources have survived, nor does York feature to any great extent in later traditions, both Anglo-Norman and Scandinavian. By the same token, there are few certainties regarding the Viking kingdom. Our knowledge of the kingdom derives chiefly from its main adversaries, namely the kings of Wessex, who ultimately created the ‘Kingdom of England’. Whereas sources reveal much more of the political situation in the kingdom of Wessex and, later, of England, we are in the dark regarding York.

At the same time, York is one of the richest cities in archaeological terms. Through many excavations, archaeologists have been able to discover and reconstruct, to a certain extent, the economical growth of the city in the Viking age. Evidence for workshops has been excavated, showing extensive artisan activity within the city during the Viking age; this productivity centred mainly around the rivers.² Similarly, many coins and sculpture from the period survives; many

¹ A quick word on the terms ‘city’ and ‘Vikings’ used here. ‘City’, as well as ‘town’, will both be used in this thesis to refer to York. One might desire a clear definition of these terms. However, because the size of cities in the early Middle Ages are mostly unknown to us, I think it unnecessary to use clear definitions regarding them. York was viewed as a major city in Anglo-Saxon England, therefore it seems valid to refer to it as a city, as indeed most scholars do. Furthermore, the term ‘Viking’ and ‘Scandinavian’ may apply to both Danish and Norse kings.

² J. Bayley, *Anglo-Scandinavian Non-Ferrous Metalworking from 16-22 Coppergate* (The Archaeology of York, vol. 17, no. 7; York, 1992); Richard Hall, *Book of Viking Age York* (London, 1994), pp. 31-107; A. J. Mainman and Nicola S. H. Rogers, *Craft, Industry and Everyday Life: Finds from Anglo-Scandinavian York* (The Archaeology of York, vol. 17, no. 14; York, 2000); A. J. Mainman and Nicola S. H. Rogers, ‘Craft and Economy in Anglo-Scandinavian York’, in *Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York*, ed. by Richard A. Hall *et al.* (The Archaeology of York, volume 8; York, 2004), pp. 459-487; P. W. Rogers, *Textile Production at 16-22 Coppergate* (The Archaeology of York, volume 17, no. 11; York, 1997).

of the coins derive from the mint of York.³ This stark contrast between the archaeological record and the written sources is the reason why Anglo-Scandinavian York is such an enigma.

Due to the nature of the surviving evidence, it is hard to assess the extent of rule by the Viking kings in the Viking kingdom of York.⁴ Generally, historians have silently supposed that the Scandinavian kings ruled York. David Rollason has questioned this assumption. In his *Northumbria, 500-1100, Creation and Destruction of Kingdom*, Rollason has argued instead that York could hardly have been ruled by the Viking kings, given their short and violent reigns; he proposed the hypothesis that the archbishops controlled the city politically.⁵

Rollason's argument contrasts with those put forward by other historians who have written about Anglo-Scandinavian York. Besides Rollason's work, views of two other scholars, Nicholas Higham and Alfred Smyth, will form the basis upon which this thesis will build. In this thesis, I aim to come to grips with the problem with which these scholars have struggled, namely the enigmatic nature of the political situation in York. In order to do this, it is not enough to analyse the available evidence for historical facts, as the above named scholars did. In order to come to a clear understanding of how the enigma of Anglo-Scandinavian came to be, we must consider the later traditions as well, not for their historical value but to consider how the Viking rulers of York were remembered. For if these kings ruled to any significant extent, why do they fade from our sources as quickly as they do? Thus, I will take a two-pronged approach, considering not only the contemporary evidence for ruling from the city, but also later Anglo-

³ P. Grierson and M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. I. The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th Centuries)* (Cambridge, 1986) pp. 321-324; J. North, *English Hammered Coinage. Volume I: Early Anglo-Saxon to Henry III c. 600-1272* (London, 1994), pp. 109-116, 137-143.

⁴ In this thesis, I will refer to the kingdom in this way. While the name is a later invention, scholars in general use the term. With it, is meant the kingdom the Vikings ruled in the territory of Northumbria, though the exact limits of this kingdom are unknown.

⁵ David Rollason, *Northumbria, 500-1100. Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom* (Cambridge 2003) pp. 214-230.

Norman and Scandinavian sources to see how Anglo-Scandinavian York was remembered by later generations.

Before moving on to the primary sources in the next chapters, I will, in this introduction, discuss the historiographical debate, focussing on the views of Smyth, Higham, and Rollason. However, to adequately understand the coming chapters, it is necessary to first provide the reader with a short outline of the history of Anglo-Scandinavian York in which the most important events of its history will be given. Next, the arguments of the three scholars will be discussed in detail, and, finally, I will further explain how I aim to come to a better understanding of the political situation in York as well as give an outline of the rest of this thesis.

A short history of York⁶

The period under consideration in this thesis starts with the capture of York by the Vikings in 866. That year, the Vikings, who had been regularly raiding Britain for slightly less than a century, arrived with an invasion army, called, in the contemporary sources, the *here*.⁷ After encamping in East Anglia, this *here* moved to Northumbria and captured York. Meanwhile, the kingdom of Northumbria was in a state of turmoil, for the Northumbrians had replaced their legitimate king, Osberht, with an illegitimate one, named Ælla. After the Vikings had captured York in 866, the two kings reconciled in face of this threat and besieged the city. Their efforts were to no avail; the Vikings slew both kings and remained in possession of York, which would belong to the Vikings until the middle of the next century.⁸

According to later sources, the Vikings installed a puppet-king to reign on their behalf,

⁶ See Appendix I for a chronological list of the different kings and archbishops of the period.

⁷ Throughout this thesis I will use the word *here* to refer to this army, because there is no satisfactory translation.

⁸ *ASC 867*, in *MS D, A sem-diplomatic edition with introduction and indices*, ed. by G. P. Cubbin (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A Collaborative Edition, volume 6; Cambridge, 1996), p. 24

named Egbert. The people of Northumbria seem to have disliked this king, for in 872 he was expelled together with the archbishop of York, Wulfhere. In 873, a man named Ricsige succeeded Egbert and archbishop Wulfhere was reinstated to his former position.⁹ In 875, the *here*, which had been mainly campaigning in the south of England, split up. One part, led by Halfdan, returned to Northumbria, where, in 866, Halfdan settled with his army, sharing out the land to his followers.¹⁰

From the settlement of Halfdan until the expulsion of the last Viking king of York, Eric Bloodaxe, in 954, little is known about the history of York. Contemporary written sources deal chiefly with the kingdom of York in relation to Wessex. The little information which is related, is from an outsider's perspective. Sometimes the sources provide us with information on the different reigns of kings or archbishops. Despite the scarcity of the information, some important events in the history of York can be established. The ascension of Athelstan, king of Wessex, as king of England, when he obtained Northumbria in 927, is one of those events. At King Athelstan's death in 939, the Northumbrians chose to give allegiance to a Viking king, namely Olaf Guthfrithson who had fought against King Athelstan at *Brunanburh* in 937. This king was succeeded by a namesake of his, Olaf Sihtricson. King Olaf Sihtricson, together with another Viking king named Rægnald Guthfrithson, were expelled by Edmund, king of Wessex, in 944 when he took over the rulership of Northumbria; he would hold the territory until his death in 946.¹¹

⁹ *HR II*, annals 867, 872, 873, in *Symeonis Monachi Opera Omnia*, ed. by Thomas Arnold (Volume 2; London, 1885) pp. 106, 110; Roger of Wendover, *Chronica siue flores historiarum*, annals 867, 872, 873, in *Rerum Anglicarum scriptores post Bedam præcipui, ex vetustissimis coicibvs manuscriptis nunc primvm in lucem editi*, ed. by Henry Saville (1596, reprint 1970, Westmead), pp. 189-190, 206-207; Symeon, *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius hoc est Dunelmensis ecclesie*, bk. 2, chs. 6, in *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius hoc est Dunelmensis ecclesie*, in *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, ecclesie, Tract on the Origins and Progress of this the Church of Durham*, ed. and trans. by David Rollason (Oxford, 2000), pp. 94-99.

¹⁰ *ASC*, 875, 876, in *MS D*, p. 263

¹¹ *ASC* 927, 941, 944, 946, in *MS D*, pp. 41, 43.

After the death of king Edmund, Eadred succeeded to the throne of England. The Northumbrians, together with archbishop Wulfstan, pledged themselves to this new king, only to abandon him in favour of Eric Bloodaxe, a king of the Norwegian royal line. After a show of force by King Edmund, the Northumbrians quickly abandoned King Eric Bloodaxe and submitted to Eadred.¹²

Still, the Wessex royal house had not won the province over completely, for the next year, in 949, the Northumbrians invited Olaf Sihtricson back to the kingship, only to expel him three years later when they re-accepted Eric Bloodaxe as their king. Finally, Eric would be definitely expelled by the Northumbrians in 954, which meant the end of Jorvik.¹³

The historiographical debate

Armed with a knowledge of the major events connected to Anglo-Scandinavian York, it is now time to discuss the historiography. Viking age York has been the subject of several monographs, mostly contained within works dealing with the larger history of the city.¹⁴ Archaeologists have produced several books in which the material evidence is analysed and discussed.¹⁵ Little has been written specifically about the political situation of York, except by three authors: Smyth, Higham, and Rollason. The first of these scholars, Alfred Smyth, has dealt extensively with the Viking kings of York in his two-volume work, titled *Scandinavian York and Dublin: The History*

¹² ASC 948, in *MS D*, p. 44.

¹³ ASC 948, 952, 954, in *MS D*, pp. 44-45. Jorvik was the Viking name for York; when I use the name in my paper, I specifically refer to the Scandinavian era of the city.

¹⁴ See for example Charles B. Knight, *A History of the City of York: from the Foundation of the Roman Fortress of Eboracum A.D. 40 to the close of the reign of Queen Victoria A. D. 1901* (York, 1944); P. M. Tilliot (ed.), *A History of Yorkshire: the City of York* (1961).

¹⁵ See above, p. 1, no. 2.

and Archaeology of Two Related Kingdoms.¹⁶ In these two books, Smyth focussed on the intent of the kings and their political scheming. The second work under consideration is by N. J. Higham, who wrote about the province of Northumbria throughout the whole of Anglo-Saxon history in his *The Kingdom of Northumbria, AD 350-1100*.¹⁷ Within the chapter concerning Anglo-Scandinavian Northumbria, Higham argued for the prominence of the Viking kings.¹⁸ The last work, titled *Northumbria, 500-1100; Creation and Destruction of a Kingdom*, differs greatly from the first two; it was written by David Rollason, and focussed on Northumbria between 500 and 1100. Rollason views the archbishops as the dominant political power within the city of York.¹⁹ We will now, first, consider Smyth's work and views; thereafter Higham and Rollason will be discussed.

In two volumes, Smyth intends to 'present an integrated picture of the historical and archaeological evidence' relating to Scandinavian York and Dublin.²⁰ Smyth argues that Dublin and York were two related kingdoms, which acted as nodes in the empire crafted by the dynasty of Ragnar Lothbrok.²¹ These two kingdoms were connected by a route between the Firth of Forth on the west coast of Britain, settled by Vikings in the tenth century, and the Forth of Clyde on the east coast, which made travel easy and, viewed in this manner, made the two geographically divided kingdoms one. Smyth traced each king and puts forward some controversial claims. Most importantly, Smyth views, for good reason, Dublin and York as related; its kings were set on forging an 'empire' based on these two cities; the authority of the kings derived from being

¹⁶ Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian York and Dublin: The History and Archaeology of Two Related Kingdoms* (volume one: Dublin, 1975; volume two: Dublin, 1979).

¹⁷ N. J. Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria, AD 350-1100* (Gloucestershire, 1993).

¹⁸ Higham, *The Kingdom*, p. 210.

¹⁹ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 214-230.

²⁰ Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 1, p. 12.

²¹ On Ragnar Lothbrok, see chapter 2, pp. 18-23, 28-33.

descendants of Ragnar Lothbrok and, more importantly, his son Ivar the Boneless,²² who had conquered Northumbria in 866.²³

Smyth presents the activities of the archbishops in a similar manner as the scheming of the Viking kings. According to Smyth, the Danish kings utilized ecclesiastical support for their profit; on this topic Smyth states the following: ‘this pattern of ecclesiastical support for the Scandinavian rulers runs right through the history of Danish York.’²⁴ When dealing with Eric Bloodaxe, he views the archbishop, Wulfstan, as having a party of his own who maintained their own political goals.²⁵ Thus, Smyth presents the archbishops as supporting the Scandinavian rulers on the one hand, while on the other hand acting with an agenda of their own.

Smyth’s book is a great read, providing the reader with a gripping account of Viking kings set out to dominate the northern parts of the British Isles. For scholars, Smyth’s work lacks a certain subtlety. A great part of his narrative is based on Scandinavian sagas. Each time he considers a saga, he first points out the difficulties in using it as a historical source before he goes on to do exactly that, without conducting sufficient source criticism.²⁶ Smyth constructs a narrative which seems, at times, to be based more on imagination than on historical sources.

More recently, Clare Downham has published a book, titled *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland: the Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014*, which shares the scope of Smyth’s work but is more modest in its conclusions. Like Smyth, she views the kings of Dublin and York as related, for they all belonged to the dynasty of Ragnar Lothbrok. Likewise, Downham views York as the

²² Old Norse name: Ivarr inn beinlausi.

²³ Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 1, pp. 16-22, 86; Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 2, pp. 378-380.

²⁴ Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 1, p. 46.

²⁵ Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 2, pp. 93-94, 107-114, 155-159.

²⁶ See for example his treatment of *Egils Saga*: Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 2, pp. 165-169. Another example of Smyth’s assertiveness is his portrayal of the battle of *Brunanburh*, which he calls: ‘the inevitable confrontation between the grandson of Alfred and the great-grandson of Ívarr inn beinlausi to decide whether the house of Wessex or Ívarr’s line at Dublin and York should dominate England of the tenth century.’ See: Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 2, p. 55.

basis of the Viking kings in England. She does not address the question of ruling; she hardly addresses the archbishops, except for Wulfstan whose political role she minimizes, claiming his actions were mainly dictated by a concern for the independence of the Northumbrian church. Where Smyth has argued from late sources with little reserve, Downham took the opposite approach. She dismissed most sources of a late date because these contain too many traditions that cannot be checked for historical fact.²⁷

N. J. Higham's book is less ambitious than the works of Smyth and Downham, especially when it comes to Viking age York. Higham's work is aimed at a more general audience than merely professional historians; due to this, his work may at times exhibit generalisations. Furthermore, because his book is concerned with the whole of Northumbria between 500 and 1100, Viking York only takes up one chapter in the book. Higham views the Viking kings in a similar way as Smyth, namely as agents who had clear goals in mind and went efficiently about achieving them. For instance, Halfdan is said to have been aware of 'the need to control both of the two ancient parts of the kingdom and to impress the formidable nature of his own power on Northumbria's northern region' in order to gain the support of the aristocracy for his kingship.²⁸ Similarly, Higham argues that the Danes were out 'to take over every English throne'.²⁹ It should come as no surprise, then, that Higham views York as 'the stronghold (...) housing the most powerful and wealthy dynasties in Scandinavian Britain'.³⁰ Of the archbishops Higham writes little; based on Christian symbols on coinage and the later activities of Wulfstan in choosing Eric Bloodaxe over king Eadred of Wessex, Higham merely concludes that they must have come to

²⁷ Claire Downham, *Viking Kings of Britain and Ireland. The Dynasty of Ívarr to A.D. 1014* (Edinburgh, 2007), pp.63-120.

²⁸ Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria*, p. 179.

²⁹ Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria*, p. 184.

³⁰ Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria*, p. 208.

an understanding with the kings.³¹

Higham seems to follow the general line of Smyth's argument, only he shies away from using the later sagas in supporting his views. However, that may also be due to the fact that the book is aimed at a general audience and is, therefore, hardly annotated, making it, at times, difficult to understand in what way Higham came to his observations. What is peculiar about Higham's chapter on Viking age Northumbria, is that, at times, it seems one is reading writings of two different people; one emphasizing the destruction caused by the Scandinavian kings, while the other celebrates the cultural and economical accomplishments of the Viking age.³²

Smyth's and Higham's views are not surprising when compared to other scholars. Most scholars who have written on the Viking kingdom of York, often as part of a greater history of either the Vikings or Anglo-Saxon England, have agreed with the view of political dominance on the part of the kings - though it is mostly an unquestioned assumption.³³ The first scholar who has really questioned the idea of the Viking kings politically controlling York is David Rollason. Rollason argued that the real political power in York did not lie with the Viking kings but rather with the archbishops of the city.³⁴

Rollason's argument needs to be considered more comprehensively in comparison with Smyth and Higham, for Rollason addressed the question of political power in York more fully than any other scholar. Like Higham, Rollason is not primarily concerned with the city of York; instead he addresses Northumbria in general. In his book, he traces the creation and destruction of the Northumbrian kingdom throughout its history. One of his important arguments is that

³¹ Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria*, pp. 183, 202.

³² Higham, *The Kingdom of Northumbria*, pp. 194-210.

³³ Hall, *Book of Viking Age York*, pp. 15-16, 82-83; Matthew Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe, 300-900. The Sword, the Plough and the Book* (Oxon, 2007), p. 370; Else Roesdahl, *The Vikings* (2nd edition; London, 1988), pp. 242-244; Dorothy Whitelock (ed.), *English Historical Documents, c. 500-1042* (English Historical Documents volume 1; London, 1955), pp. 29-43.

³⁴ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 228-230.

Northumbria was not destroyed when it ceased to be an independent political kingdom. Instead, he argues that, even though the kingdom was conquered by the Vikings and subsequently disintegrated, the political organization of the region and the cultural and ethnic identity remained more or less the same, until the region was conquered by the Normans. Therefore, he argued, only with the Norman Conquest did Northumbria cease to exist.³⁵ To understand how Rollason came to his hypothesis regarding political power in Viking Age York, we need to trace his arguments relating to this topic in both the Anglian and Viking periods of the city's development.

In tracing the continuities through the ages, Rollason deals with the organization of power in Northumbria as a whole. Rollason treats York separately, for it has been seen by many scholars as being the capital of both Anglian and Viking age Northumbria.³⁶ Furthermore, York epitomized the balance between royal government, aristocratic power and the position of the church in the model Rollason proposes for the whole kingdom in which the church provides the continuity, on a cultural and political level, within Northumbria until the Norman Conquest.³⁷ Rollason shows that it is hard to see York as a royal centre during the Anglian period, because the sources make little mention of kings ruling from York. Even when kings were present it often had a special meaning of an ecclesiastical nature. Also, kings were often buried elsewhere, which would be strange had York been a royal centre. According to Rollason, written records, Alcuin especially, show the power of the archbishop. In one of his letters, Alcuin accuses Archbishop Eanbald II (779-after803/804)³⁸ of sheltering the enemies of the king and of having too many military retainers. Rollason argues that this reveals the ecclesiastical nature of the city and that

³⁵ Rollason, *Northumbria*, 211-290.

³⁶ Hall, *Book of Viking Age York*, p. 16; Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 203, 214-215.

³⁷ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 170, 208.

³⁸ Date from: David Rollason with Derek Gore and Gillian Fellows-Jensen, *Sources for York History to AD 1100* (The Archaeology of York, volume 1; York, 1998), p. 58.

it was effectively ruled by the archbishop who could defy Northumbrian kings.³⁹

Rollason takes the same approach for his analysis of the political situation in York during the Viking period. Traditionally, the Viking kingdom has been seen as very different from the Northumbrian one. It is perceived as a clearly defined kingdom with a governmental machinery. Rollason doubts this perception and in his book asks the following question: ‘how great really was the break between the rule of the last Northumbrian king and that of the Viking kings?’⁴⁰ The kingdom of the Vikings is called ‘The Viking kingdom of York’, but Rollason notes that this name never occurs in contemporary sources.⁴¹ Furthermore, the order of succession of different kings during the Viking age is unclear. After a consideration of the succession, Rollason concludes: ‘the sequence of these kings was broken, complex and marked by violence and instability. It is hard to believe that these were the rulers who made York ‘one of the great cities of the Viking world’.’⁴²

Rollason then surveys the evidence that, according to him, supports the view that the Viking kings did play an important role in the development of the city. The evidence in question is archaeological and numismatic. Archaeological findings have shown that the city of York grew rapidly from the tenth century onward.⁴³ Rollason surveys the archaeological evidence, for the attributed sophistication of the Viking rulers has, at times, been based on this type of evidence.⁴⁴ Rollason is not convinced that the city’s growth was the result of Viking actions. Instead,

³⁹ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 203-208.

⁴⁰ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 214.

⁴¹ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 215.

⁴² Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 214-218.

⁴³ Hall, *Book of Viking Age*, p. 31-33, 93.

⁴⁴ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 220. Rollason reacts mainly to the scholar Peter Sawyer, whose book *The Age of the Vikings* has stressed the positive results of the Viking invasions. I have yet to encounter a scholar attributing the growth of the city directly to the kings; rather, the influx of Scandinavians into the city and the contact with Scandinavia has sometimes been given as the reason for the growth of York as a trading centre. See: Peter Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings* (2nd edition; London, 1971), pp. 48-65, 148-176, 202-218.

Rollason argues that many of the findings are not of a typical Viking nature. The streets that can be proven to have been laid out in the Viking age, are, according to Rollason, part of a typical town development which can be seen in other towns in Britain throughout the tenth century as well.⁴⁵ Rollason argues that the growth may just be part of the development of the town which finds its origin in Anglian times. 'We need not therefore assume that the development of York was the work of the Viking kings, and attribute power and sophistication to them on the basis of it.'⁴⁶

Rollason perceives more continuity from the Anglian to the Viking period in the numismatic evidence as well. Coins were struck with the names of Viking kings on them and silver pennies were reintroduced with the coming of the Vikings, a possible result of their plundering according to Rollason.⁴⁷ The coins show Christian elements, which has generally been interpreted as the wish of the Viking kings to be accepted as Christians. Rollason argues that apart from the Viking king Guthfrith, who was buried in the York Minster in 895, there are no sources that offer proof that any other Viking king was Christian.⁴⁸ Also, Rollason finds it unlikely that the kings could maintain any bureaucratic machinery which would be needed to mint such coins because of the broken sequence of kings and their, generally, short reigns. He, instead, argues that 'it is possible that the coins are evidence of the varying degrees of control

⁴⁵ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 223-224. The assertion of Rollason is a tad deterministic, for it is very hard to argue when streets were laid out, though, indeed, Martin Biddle has demonstrated that the later development of towns in Britain can be traced back to start in the Anglian period, see: Martin Biddle, 'The Evolution of Towns: Planned Towns before 1066', in *The Plans and Topography of Medieval Towns in England and Wales*, ed. by M. W. Barley (The Council for British Archaeology, Research Report No. 14; London, 1976), pp. 19-32.

⁴⁶ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 220-224.

⁴⁷ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 225.

⁴⁸ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 227. The Viking Guthrum, along with thirty of his followers, was baptized after signing a treaty with king Alfred in 878; however, Guthrum may sometimes be called king of the Danes, he was not king of Northumbria which had been settled by Halfdan who had split from Guthrum's army, cf: F. M. Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England* (3rd edition; Oxford, 1971) pp. 252-257.

exercised by the archbishops over York and over the Viking kings themselves'.⁴⁹

Next, Rollason formulates his hypothesis:

'The development of York and the coinage of York do not require us to accept that the Viking kings were the predominant force in the city, and thus open the way to the alternative hypothesis that it was the archbishops who wielded the real power, using the military capabilities of the Viking kings when it suited them to do so against, in particular, the military and political ambitions of the kings of England to the south, in much the same way that late Roman rulers used the military power of barbarian federates.'⁵⁰

Rollason argues against the destruction of the kingdom of Northumbria with the coming of the Vikings, for the political organization of the kingdom remained the same. The archbishops of York played an essential role in accordance with the Northumbrian aristocracy. Together, they could accept and expel kings, effectively proving that they had more power than such kings.⁵¹

Rollason's hypothesis is a refreshing novelty in the research on Anglo-Scandinavian York but there are some issues. If one does not accept Rollason's premise that Anglian York was ruled by the archbishops, his argument fails. While it is true that the sequence of Viking kings seems broken and their reigns are short, this is equally true for the Northumbrian kings.⁵² The numismatic evidence is not as clear-cut as Rollason presents it, as will be seen in chapter four of this thesis. While Rollason has provided a thought-provoking hypothesis, there remain

⁴⁹ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 219. 224-228.

⁵⁰ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 228.

⁵¹ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 229-230.

⁵² For an overview of the chronology, see: Rollason, *Sources*, pp. 51-57.

considerable issues preventing one from accepting his arguments.

The three scholars which we have discussed thus present ultimately two models. In the one, Anglo-Scandinavian York was ruled by the Viking kings while in the other the city was ruled by prince-archbishops who utilized the Viking army for their own purposes.⁵³ It is fascinating how such a debate could have formed, and why there is so much room for contrasting hypotheses. This thesis will explore the different sources on Anglo-Scandinavian York; that way, we can come to an understanding of how this debate could take the form it did, and propose an alternative solution to the problem found in the historiography.

Plan for this Thesis

Now that the historiographical views are clear, I will discuss the aims of, and the plan for, this thesis. For, while the scholarly works discussed above are examples of some remarkable research, there is yet to be given a satisfying solution to the question of who ruled in Anglo-Scandinavian York. While all of the authors have come to terms with the primary sources and tried to distil historical fact from them in order to construct a narrative as closely to ‘wie est eigentlich gewesen’,⁵⁴ their attempts to narrate what actually happened failed, otherwise there would not be this discrepancy between the various views.

In this thesis, I will take a wider approach than those of the scholars discussed above. The reason for this is that this thesis is concerned with more than simply the question of who ruled, it is concerned with the paradox of the sources of the Middle Ages on the rulers of York which have formed the basis of the different hypotheses discussed above. Therefore, this thesis will address two themes. On the one hand, I will consider later Anglo-Norman and Scandinavian

⁵³ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 229.

⁵⁴ Leopold von Ranke, *Geschichten der romanischen und germanischen Völker von 1494-1514*, in *Die Meisterwerke*, vol. 1: *Fürsten und Völker*, by Leopold von Ranke, ed. by Willy Andreas (Wiesbaden, 1957), p. 4.

traditions on Anglo-Scandinavian York to reconstruct to what extent the rulers were remembered in England and Scandinavia and try to come to an understanding of why this great kingdom faded from the sources. On the other hand, I will consider the contemporary evidence for ruling from York by either the Viking kings or the archbishops. These two themes seem independent of each other, but form one when viewed as the basis of modern day understanding of Anglo-Scandinavian York.

To come to an understanding of the later traditions and form my own hypothesis on the political situation in Viking age York, I will move chronologically and geographically backwards through the different sources. I will first explore, in chapter two, the Scandinavian traditions to see how later Scandinavians remembered this great kingdom that once was in the northern parts of the British Isles. Next, in chapter three, I will explore the traditions which were contained within Anglo-Norman writings, in order to survey to what extent Anglo-Scandinavian York was remembered in England. The scholarly concept of social memory will be the key to understanding why few traditions on Jorvik were passed down to later generations. In chapter four, we will explore the contemporary evidence to see to what extent there is evidence of ruling from York. Before moving to the final analysis, we will take a step back from the sources in chapter five, to consider some features of Anglo-Saxon England which will be part of my hypothesis on the political situation in Jorvik. In chapter six, I will put forward my hypothesis while at the same time I will consider the later Anglo-Norman and Scandinavian traditions and reconstruct how the enigma of York came to be.

Chapter Two: The *Nachleben* of the Jorvik kings in Scandinavia

The Vikings are perhaps most famous for their sagas which recount the great deeds of their heroes and kings. These sagas present a very difficult corpus of material to historians, for they are generally written a couple of centuries after the events they relate, while containing material which is the stuff of legend rather than history. What these sources do present us with is the way the past was viewed by the audience and the authors of the sagas. The aim of this chapter is not to distil historical facts from these sources; rather we will focus on how the authors or compilers of the sagas viewed Anglo-Scandinavian York.

Of Jorvik, few sagas have survived the test of time. From the start of our period survive stories about the capture of York by the sons of Ragnar Lothbrok, while at the other end of the time span we find a tale of Eric Bloodaxe. The central goal of this chapter will be to come to an understanding of why so little on Viking age York was remembered by the later Scandinavians.

In order to understand the traditions on Jorvik, I will take several steps. Before considering the sources, a key concept must be introduced, namely social memory. This concept will prove central to understanding the traditions with which we are concerned here. After the discussion of social memory, I will give a short summary of both stories under consideration in this chapter; then, I will discuss these accounts, identifying elements deriving from tradition and where these may have originated. Next I will discuss how the Viking kings are portrayed. Lastly, I will discuss why the kings are presented the way they are, as well as facing the question of the survival rate of traditions relating to Viking age York.

As said above, social memory is a very important concept with which historians can come to an understanding of the traditions of certain groups about their past. The term builds on the term ‘collective memories’, put forward by one of the pioneers regarding the concept of memory,

namely Maurice Halbwachs. In *Mémoires collectives*, Halbwachs argued for a distinction between history and collective memory, the latter being the living experience of different social groups. According to Halbwachs, collective memory only exists when the past remembered seems continuous in its relevance to the present. If the continuity between past and present is broken, then, through history, the collective memories of different social groups are combined to create continuity within a newly constructed narrative. Halbwachs viewed collective memory as distinct from history, the latter only existing in written form while collective memory belonged to the oral sphere.⁵⁵

Ever since Halbwachs' publication in 1925, scholars have built upon Halbwachs' observations and questioned his distinction between collective memory and history, for 'successful history is assimilated into collective memory'.⁵⁶ It is now recognised that history shares many characteristics with collective memory, for history, like collective memory, serves a certain purpose. Therefore, James Fentress and Chris Wickham have formulated the term 'social memory' through which a social group preserves its traditions, oral or written; such a group uses these preserved traditions to give meaning to their past and present. Social memory is always subject to change, to reordering and restructuring; in a sense, like memory itself.⁵⁷

The most important study regarding social memory in the early Middle Ages is Patrick Geary's work, titled *Phantoms of Remembrance*. In his work, Geary focusses on the 'mutation' of the year thousand. That 'mutation' refers to the perceived break in historical tradition around the year thousand, after which historians actively re-imagined their past, be it an individual or

⁵⁵ Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*, ed. by Gérard Namer with Marie Jaisson (Paris, 1997; originally published in 1925), pp. 97-14; Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (trans. by Lewis Coser; London, 1992; originally published in 1877), pp. 23-27.

⁵⁶ Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the end of the first millennium* (New Jersey, 1994), p. 12.

⁵⁷ James Fentress and Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 26. 40.

collective past, to suit the needs of their own age. The historians of the eleventh century remoulded the past they encountered into a tool with which they were able to shape their identity and give meaning to new units of organization. Geary argues that, because modern knowledge of the early Middle Ages is largely based on these eleventh-century historians, a clear understanding of the practice of remembering is necessary in order to critically analyse these later sources.⁵⁸ Geary argues that around the first millennium the ‘guardians of memory’ transformed received traditions to suit their own needs. In that process, older records, which had lost their relevance, were destroyed. The past was only worth remembering when it was relevant for the present.⁵⁹

The concept of social memory, as defined by Fentress and Wickham, is a useful tool to understand the later traditions of Scandinavian York. This concept will be important in both this chapter and the next. In understanding the later traditions, we must, therefore, consider the relevance of the transmitted past for the present of the sources. With a clear understanding of the concept of social memory as a tool of communities to give meaning to both their past and present, it is time to turn to the Scandinavian traditions on Jorvik.

Ragnar Lothbrok and his son Ivar: the Conquest of York

In this section, we are concerned with the tradition of the conquest of York by the sons of Ragnar Lothbrok, while the following section will address the saga concerned with Eric Bloodaxe. Here, I will first address the two sources used to understand the tradition of Ragnar and his sons. Next, I will summarize the story leading up to capture of York in 866. At the end of the section I will briefly consider the story as found in Saxo Grammaticus’ *Gesta Danorum*. The final analysis of

⁵⁸ Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, pp. 3-9, 26-29, 177-178.

⁵⁹ Geary, *Phantom of Remembrance*, pp. 46-47, 134, 178; Wickham, *Social Memory*, pp. 200-202.

the story will be saved for the end of this chapter.

The story of Ragnar and his sons has survived in many different Scandinavian works, even up to the nineteenth century.⁶⁰ In this section we are only concerned with two of the earliest of these sources, namely *Ragnars Saga*, and the prose narrative titled *Ragnarssona þattr*.⁶¹

Of *Ragnars saga*, two versions, the so-called X and Y versions, have survived in the manuscripts. The X version is dated to c. 1250. It is only partly preserved in a single manuscript which dates from the second half of the fifteenth century.⁶² The manuscript in which the text survives is difficult to read, for in c. 1600 a different text was copied over the original saga. The Y version was written in the second half of the thirteenth century and it survives in an early fifteenth-century manuscript.⁶³ It is a prose narrative of twenty chapters. The Y version is the one that later editions, including the one used here, are based on.⁶⁴ *Ragnars saga* itself is a compilation of several sources, combining these to convey a single narrative.⁶⁵

The *Ragnarssona þattr* was composed in the late thirteenth or early fourteenth century, possibly by a man named Haukr Erlendsson.⁶⁶ It survives in an early fourteenth-century manuscript.⁶⁷ The *þattr*, as it survives, is a short text of only five chapters. It seems to have been based on a lost version of *Ragnars saga*, on which the Y and X versions may also have been based, as well as on a lost version of the *Skjöldunga saga*. The *þattr* presents a somewhat simpler

⁶⁰ Rory McTurk, *Studies in Ragnars saga Loðbrokar and its Major Scandinavian Analogues* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 53-62.

⁶¹ For a complete study of the whole tradition regarding Ragnar Lothbrok, see McTurk, *Studies*.

⁶² Cod. AM 147 4to, see McTurk, *Studies*, p. 54.

⁶³ Ny kgl. saml. 1824b 4to, see McTurk, *Studies*, p. 55.

⁶⁴ *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, in *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by G. Jónsson and Vilhjálmsson (Reykjavík, 1954) vol. 1, pp. 219-285.

⁶⁵ McTurk, *Studies*, pp. 54-55. The sources include parts of the *Krákumál* poem, parts of Sigvatr Þórðarson's *Knútsdrapa*, the *Ragnarssona þattr*, and the Y version of *Ragnars saga*, see: McTurk, *Studies*, pp. 54-55.

⁶⁶ Cf.: Bjarni Guðnason, 'Gerðir og ritþróun Ragnars sögu loðbrókar', in *Einarsbók. Afmæliskeðja til Einars Ól. Sveinssonar*, ed. by Bjarni Guðnason *et al.* (Reykjavík, 1963), pp. 28-37.

⁶⁷ AM 544, 4to.

narrative than that found in *Ragnars saga*.⁶⁸

Now follows a summary of the saga in my own words, based, mainly, on *Ragnars saga* with some added differences from the *Þattr*. Such a summary is necessary to understand the contents of the tradition. The saga tells us how, in the time of King Ælla's reign over Northumbria, there lived a king somewhere in Scandinavia. This king was called Ragnar Lothbrok, who had three sons who enjoyed more fame than he did. In order to enhance his reputation, Ragnar decides to go to England, with only two merchant ships, to conquer that kingdom. When Ragnar sets out for England, he is shipwrecked on England's coast, and then starts to conquer everything in sight. *Ragnars saga* withholds geographical details, simply stating that Ragnar arrived in England, then ruled by Ælla; the *Þattr* constricts the action to Northumbria.⁶⁹

The saga then recounts how Ælla, after learning of the army fighting in his lands, raises a very large force of his own. However, he instructs his men to refrain from killing Ragnar, for that would mean inviting the wrath of Ragnar's sons, famed in England as well. When Ragnar's and Ælla's armies meet on the field of battle, Ragnar, after having killed many enemies, is captured. When brought before King Ælla, Ragnar refuses to reveal his identity. He is therefore thrown into a snake-pit in order to force him to identify himself. Only after Ragnar's death, Ælla realises he has killed King Ragnar Lothbrok. Afraid that Ragnar's sons will find out, Ælla decides, paradoxically, to send an envoy to the sons to tell them of their father's death himself.

The saga then turns the perspective of the story to Ragnar's sons, Huitserk, Sigurð, and

⁶⁸ McTurk, *Studies*, p. 56; cf.: Bjarni Guðnason, *Danakonunga sögur* (Íslensk fornrit, 35; Reykjavík, 1963) pp. li-lii.

⁶⁹ 'En konungr sá hét Ella, er þá réð Englandi.', in: *Ragnars saga loðbrókar*, in *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by G. Jónsson and Vilhjálmsón (Reykjavík, 1954) vol. 1, p. 267; 'Í þann tíma réð sá konungr fyrir Norðhumberlandi, er Ella hét.', in: *Þáttur af Ragnars sonum*, in *Fornaldar Sögur Norðurlanda*, ed. by G. Jónsson and Vilhjálmsón (Reykjavík, 1954) vol. 1, p. 296.

Ivar, who receive the news in Denmark. Huitserk and Sigurð are outraged about their father's death, but Ivar feels his father deserved what happened, for he had been ill-prepared and without a feud against Ælla. Therefore Ivar decides not to join his brothers in their campaign of revenge directed at Ælla. The other brothers take up arms against their father's murderer but fail. Subsequently, Ivar seeks out Ælla and they decide to settle the murder of Ragnar by a grant of land as far as an ox-hide can cover. Ivar manipulates the hide so that it is able to stretch wider; the city, subsequently founded and called London in *Ragnars saga* and York in the *Þattr*,⁷⁰ is told to be 'the biggest and best city in all the northern countries'.⁷¹ Ivar promises Ælla never to take up arms against him.

Once Ivar has settled, the saga recounts how he asks his brothers to send him all the money they can muster. With these resources, Ivar bribes all the nobles in Northumbria, leaving Ælla friendless. When the nobles have promised they will refrain from any action if Ælla is attacked, Ivar invites his brothers over to England. When the army of his brothers arrives, Ivar goes to Ælla and promises to speak to his kinsmen on the king's behalf. Instead, he urges his brothers to attack, meanwhile keeping his promise to Ælla not to take up arms against the king. The battle which follows ends in the defeat and capture of king Ælla. Revenge for Ragnar's death is had by the carving of an eagle on Ælla's back. After Ælla's death, the saga recounts how Ivar is made king of Northumbria while his brothers remain kings in Denmark. When Ivar dies, he is buried in a mound where invasions were wont to arrive; with King Ivar's body resting there, no expedition landing at that place could ever succeed. Ultimately, this element is used in the events of 1066, explaining the defeat of Harold Hardrada. According to the saga, William the

⁷⁰ '(...)ok þar lætr hann gera borg eina mikla, ok er sú kölluð Lundúnaborg.', in *Ragnars saga*, in *Fornaldar Sögur*, p. 276; 'Hann reisir þar á sterka borgarveggi, ok er sú borg nú kölluð Jórvík.', in *Þattr*, in *Fornaldar Sögur*, vol. 1, p. 297.

⁷¹ 'Hún er allra borga mest ok ágæzt of öll Norðrlönd.', in *Ragnars saga*, in *Fornaldar Sögur*, vol. 1, p. 276.

Conqueror only succeeded in conquering Northumbria after he had Ivar's remains removed.⁷²

The historian Saxo Grammaticus also included the history of Ragnar in his *Gesta Danorum*. Before addressing his version, we will, briefly, outline some aspects of his work. Saxo wrote in the early thirteenth century in Norway.⁷³ Scholars disagree whether he was a monk or whether he occupied a secular position under a person named Absalon, of whom Saxo was, according to himself, a servant.⁷⁴ Saxo enjoyed a thorough education and was familiar with classical authors as well as with northern oral traditions.⁷⁵ No manuscript survives which contains the whole work.⁷⁶ The only witness to Saxo's complete work is the so-called editio princeps, printed in Paris in 1514.⁷⁷ It remains a debate whether the editio princeps was based on a thirteenth-century interpolation or on a manuscript written by Saxo himself.⁷⁸

Saxo's history must be seen as an attempt to create a continuous history of a strong dynasty of kings for the contemporary ruling kings of Norway. In writing his work, he made use of Danish historical works, as well as of both oral and written Icelandic sources.⁷⁹ The first nine books, the last one containing Ragnar's legend, lack historical basis but are incredibly rich in

⁷² This account is based on *Ragnars saga loðbrókar* and *Þáttur af Ragnars sonum*. See: *Ragnars Saga*, in *Fornaldur Sögur*, vol. 1, pp. 221-285; *Þáttur af Ragnars sonum*, in *Fornaldur Sögur*, vol. 1, pp. 289-303.

⁷³ Davidson, H. E. (ed.) and Peter Fischer (trans.), *Saxo Grammaticus, The History of the Danes, Volume 1: English Text* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1979), p. 1.

⁷⁴ Davidson, *Saxo*, vol 1, p. 4.

⁷⁵ Davidson, H. E. (ed.) and Peter Fischer (trans.), *Saxo Grammaticus, The History of the Danes, Volume 2: Commentary* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1980), pp. 10-11.

⁷⁶ The fragments are: Ny kgl. Sml. 4to 869 g (Angers Fragment), Ny. kgl. Sml. Fol. 570 (the Kall-Rasmussen's fragment), Ny. kgl. Sml. Fol. 570 (the Lassen fragment), Ny. kgl. Sml. Fol. 570 (Plesner fragment). Another copy existed, from a different manuscript, but was lost in the Copenhagen fire of 1728; see Davidson, *Saxo*, vol. 2, pp. 12-13.

⁷⁷ Printed by Jodocus Badius Ascensius by the agentship of Christiern Pederson (c. 1480-1554). See: C. Pederson (ed.), *Danorum Regum heroumque Historiæ ... a Saxone Grammatico ... conscriptæ*, (Paris, 1514).

⁷⁸ For an evaluation of this problem and a treatment of the textual history, see Ivan Boserup, 'The Angers Fragment and the Archetype of *Gesta Danorum*', in *Saxo Grammaticus. A Medieval Author between Norse and Latin Culture*, ed. by Karsten Friis-Jensen (Copenhagen, 1981), pp. 9-26.

⁷⁹ Bjarni Guðnason, 'The Icelandic Sources of Saxo Grammaticus', in *Saxo Grammaticus. A Medieval Author Between Norse and Latin Culture*, Karsten Friis-Jensen (Copenhagen, 1981), pp. 79-93.

folklore and legendary stories, making it an invaluable source on its own accord.⁸⁰

Now, we will shortly consider the differences between the saga summarized above and the account of Saxo. Saxo tells how, at a certain point in his reign, Ragnar killed Hama, a king in Britain and father of Ælla. Later in Ragnar's reign, Ivar returns from Britain where he was expelled from his throne and replaced by Ælla, even though Saxo never tells of Ivar gaining the kingdom in the first place. Because of the lack of a reference to Ivar gaining the throne, Alfred P. Smyth has suggested that Saxo switched to a different source at that point in writing, thus explaining the discrepancy.⁸¹

After the expulsion, the saga tells how Ragnar sets out with Ivar and how they drive out king Ælla. However, after Ragnar had desecrated Christian rites in Denmark, God made sure Ragnar met his doom: for Ælla managed to imprison Ragnar and put him to death in the snake-pit. Like in *Ragnars saga* and the *þattr*, Ælla is unaware of the identity of his victim. The story of Ivar and the ox-hide is practically the same in the *Gesta Danorum*, although Saxo does not name the city founded by Ivar. Nor is there mention of the cleverness of Ivar in dealing with his brothers and Ælla; Saxo merely relates how Ælla was captured in battle by the brothers of Ivar. The carving of the blood-eagle contains a bit more horror, for they decided to, literally, rub salt in Ælla's wounds.⁸²

What we have encountered in this section is a tradition regarding the Viking conquest of York and Northumbria by the sons of Ragnar Lothbrok. Before analysing the contents of this tradition, I will now introduce the saga featuring Eric Bloodaxe.

⁸⁰ 'Introduction', vol. 2, pp. 1-9.

⁸¹ Alfred P. Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings in the British Isles, 850-880* (Oxford, 1977), pp. 83-85.

⁸² This summary is based on: Saxo Grammaticus, *Gesta Danorum*, book nine, part IV, ch. 14, 34, 37-38, part V, ch. 1-5, in *Saxonis Gesta Danorum*, ed. by J. Olrik and H. Raeder (Copenhagen, 1931), pp. 254, 261-264.

Eric Bloodaxe in the *Saga Egil Skallagrimsson*

The other Viking king of York who is found in the Scandinavian sources is Eric Bloodaxe. In fact, he is a major character in the Icelandic *Saga Egil Skallagrimsson*.⁸³ *Egils Saga* recounts the story of a family of Icelandic origin, starting with Kveld-Ulf and ending with his grandson Egil. The story focusses on the relationship of that family with the dynasty of Norwegian kings. In this section, I aim to introduce the reader briefly to some important aspects of the context in which *Egils saga* was composed, after which I will provide a summary of the most important passages pertaining to King Eric Bloodaxe.

The main plot of the saga is concerned with the family of Kveld-Ulf trying to maintain their independence in Iceland from the Norwegian kings. The theme of independence was a result of the political situation at the time of writing, for in the thirteenth century, when the saga was composed, Iceland was trying to preserve its independence from the king of Norway; in this light, the saga shows a glorious past of a family battling powerful kings and fighting for their rights.⁸⁴ Jesse Byock sums this up in relation to social memory, a concept introduced above, by stating that the saga ‘exemplifies a medieval community’s use of “history” in turning stories of the past into reflections about contemporary thirteenth-century social and economic issues.’⁸⁵ The saga is also part of a tradition of Icelandic family sagas which tried to establish the origin of the Icelandic people in relation to their motherland, Norway. The saga represents a combination of

⁸³ Of Eric Bloodaxe several poems have been identified as praising him. Here we will only address *Egils Saga* and the poem ‘Head-ransom’ within that saga because these feature York explicitly. For an overview see: Matthew Townend, ‘Whatever happened to York Viking Poetry? Memory, Tradition and the Transmission of Skaldic Verse’, *Saga-book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* (2003), vol. 27, pp. 48-90.

⁸⁴ Guðrún Nordal, ‘*Sturlunga saga* and the context of saga-writing’, in *Introductory Essays on Egils Saga and Njáls Saga*, ed. by John Hines and Desmond Slay (London, 1992), p. 2; Christine Fell (trans. and ed.), *Egils Saga* (London, 1975), pp. x-xii; John Hines, ‘Kingship in *Egils saga*’, in *Introductory Essays on Egils Saga and Njáls Saga*, ed. by John Hines and Desmond Slay (London, 1992), p. 32.

⁸⁵ J. L. Byock, ‘Social Memory and the Sagas. The Case of *Egils saga*’, *Scandinavian Studies* (2004) vol. 73, no. 3, p. 301.

historical and invented traditions.⁸⁶

To understand the social context of the composition of the saga, the question of authorship must be briefly discussed. *Egils saga* is traditionally attributed to Snorri Sturluson, a descendant of Egil, who wrote the *Heimskringla*, a history of the kings of Norway. A comparison of passages between the *Heimskringla* and *Egils Saga* by the scholar Peter Halberg showed a considerable similarity in the vocabulary used compared to other contemporary texts not attributed to Sturluson.⁸⁷ However, Egil Halldorsson, also a descendant of Egil and living on the same estate as Snorri, has also been suggested as the author.⁸⁸ On the question of authorship, Christine Fell concluded: ‘whatever hand wrote the actual text the saga shows an exact knowledge of the district round Borg and the traditions relating to Egil’s life there, as well as the political situation in Norway during the preceding generation.’⁸⁹ Furthermore, ‘(...) the saga’s pattern and purpose suggests that one mind dominated the material.’⁹⁰ This one mind shows to have been a skilled composer of narrative as well as verse. It is thought he used a combination of written sources and oral traditions for his work; the latter being very likely, given he was probably a descendant of Egil. The saga was written in the first half of the thirteenth century.⁹¹ The earliest manuscript which contains the complete text is dated to c. 1330-1370.⁹² The manuscript context will be addressed again in the final analysis.

⁸⁶ Byock, ‘Social Memory’, pp. 299-303. There are some interesting parallels between these ethnographic origins stories of Iceland and those of other European kingdoms. Byock argues that the crossing of the north Atlantic was a significant event in the past of Iceland through which a new beginning of their history was made. The work of Herwig Wolfram could be fruitfully explored in relation to this. Cf.: Herwig Wolfram, ‘*Origo et Religio*: Ethnic traditions and literature in early medieval texts’, in *From Roman Provinces to Medieval Kingdoms*, ed. by T. F. X. Noble (New York, 2006), pp. 70-90.

⁸⁷ For the comparison, consult: Peter Hallberg, *Snorri Sturluson och Egils saga Skallagrímssonar. Ett försök til språklig författerbestämning* (Studia Islandica, Volume 20; Reykjavík 1962), pp. 23-51, 59-178.

⁸⁸ Fell, *Egils Saga*, pp. ix-x.

⁸⁹ Fell, *Egils Saga*, p. x.

⁹⁰ Fell, *Egils Saga*, p. x.

⁹¹ Bernard Scudder (trans.) and Svanhildur Óskarsdóttir (ed.), *Egil’s saga* (London, 2004), pp. xii-xiv.

⁹² Codex *Möðruvallabók*, AM 132 fol.

Leaving aside matters of origin and provenance, it is now time to consider the portrayal of Eric Bloodaxe in the saga. Eric was the son of Harold Fairhair, king of Norway (c. 848-931), and was to become one of the main antagonists of Egil in the saga. After Erik ‘assumed power’,⁹³ he starts going on Viking raids. At a certain point, he befriends Thorolf, the brother of Egil. Eric also tries to gain the friendship of Thorolf’s father, the son of Kveld-Ulf named Skalla-Grim. Skalla-Grim, however, is not interested. This reveals a pattern in the saga: the family of Kveld-Ulf is split in two, where one of the two sons of each generation is friendly with the Norwegian kings while the other son is not.⁹⁴ The split in the family exemplifies the tension in the saga between being a king’s retainer and freedom.⁹⁵

In the saga, the tension between Egil and Eric starts when Egil kills a servant of the king, named Bard, at a feast at Atloy. Thorir Hroaldsson, who is a foster-son of Kveld-Ulf (which makes him practically family to Egil),⁹⁶ excuses Egil’s actions to King Eric who declares that he never wants to see the murderer again. Eric’s wish is not fulfilled, for he encounters Egil again at the ‘Gula assembly’ (a legislative assembly). Egil is present with his close friend Arinbjorn, who is also the foster-brother of King Eric, to defend his claim to property which was taken from his wife by a man named Berg-Onund. Berg-Onund’s appropriation of the property of Egil’s wife enjoyed the support of King Eric and his wife Gunnhild. After both sides have been discussed and Egil’s claim has been rejected, Egil leaves with Arinbjorn; Eric orders his followers to track down and kill Egil but they fail in this endeavour.

⁹³ ‘Eiríkr blóðøx tók þa við ríki (...)’, in *Saga Egil Skallagrimsson*, in *Egils Saga*, ed. by Bjarni Einarsson (Exeter, 2003), ch. 37, p. 50; translation derived from: Fell, *Egils Saga*, ch. 37, p. 53. Note that all translation from *Egils Saga* is taken from Christine Fell’s her translation.

⁹⁴ Fell, *Egils Saga*, pp. xiii-xiv. Of the sons of Kveld-Ulf, Thorolf and Skalla-Grim, Thorolf is the cooperative one while Skalla-Grimson doesn’t want to have anything to do with the kings; of Skalla-Grimson’s sons, Thorolf and Egil, Thorolf seeks the friendship of Eric while Egil becomes his adversary.

⁹⁵ Byock, ‘Social Memory’, pp. 306-307.

⁹⁶ Christine Fell states that ties of fostering are ‘scarcely less close than kinship’, see: Fell, *Egils Saga*, p. xx.

Eric finally becomes king of Norway when, at the age of seventy, Harald gives his kingdom officially to Eric. After the death of their father, a quarrel over the kingdom starts between his sons. In the end, Eric succeeds in killing his brothers and securing the kingdom for himself. However, Eric's reign does not last a long time, for after a year a certain man named Hakon, the foster-son of King Athelstan of England,⁹⁷ gains the kingdom of Norway, forcing Eric to flee. Eric, together with his family and his foster-brother Arinbjorn, goes to England and starts raiding there. Upon learning this, King Athelstan comes to meet Eric and grants him Northumbria to rule. It is said that Eric 'always kept his residence at York'.⁹⁸

At the same time, the saga tells how Egil decides to visit king Athelstan, who had promised Egil to accommodate him at his court. While sailing to England, Egil is shipwrecked at the Humber mouth, near York. After learning Eric is residing at York, Egil realises his chances of escape are slim and he decides to seek out the king's dearest advisor, and Egil's close friend, Arinbjorn. When Arinbjorn and Egil meet, the former decides that the most prudent course of action is to go to king Eric's court and seek reconciliation.

Once Egil is brought before Eric, Egil's case is argued by Arinbjorn while Gunnhild, Eric's wife, argues against him. The latter is hardly surprising, for in the saga Gunnhild has done nothing but obstruct Egil, fulfilling Arinbjorn's claim in the saga that Gunnhild 'is the greatest of your [i.e. Egil] enemies'.⁹⁹ Eric is persuaded by Arinbjorn to let Egil live for the night and to make a decision on the matter the following day. That night, despite an attempt by Gunnhild to distract him, Egil composes a poem of praise for King Eric. The next day he recites the poem,

⁹⁷ Indeed, here is meant Athelstan reigning in England; the dates certainly don't work out for Athelstan reigned in England from 924/925 until 939.

⁹⁸ 'Eiríkr konungr hafði jafnan atsetu í Jórvík', in *Saga Egil Skallagrimsson*, ch. 61, p. 101; Fell, *Egils Saga*, ch. 59, p. 103.

⁹⁹ '(...) er Gunnhildr inn mesti óvinr þinn (...)', in *Saga Egil Skallagrimsson*, ch. 57, p. 87; Fell, *Egils Saga*, ch. 56, p. 89. Gunnhild has argued against Egil to her husband on several occasions, including in the Gula Assembly, urging her husband each time to kill Egil.

rich in both alliteration and end-rhyme, in front of King Eric. After the recital, Eric decides to let Egil live, partly as a favour to his advisor Arinbjorn, upon the condition that Egil will never return. Eric's wish is fulfilled this time; the saga tells of Eric's death during a raid in the west without specifying the circumstances.¹⁰⁰

The Coming of a Dynasty

How did the Scandinavians remember the Viking kings is the question with which we are concerned here. We are presented with stories on the capture of York and the last Viking king of York, while the Scandinavian sources remain silent on the other Viking kings ruling from the city. The reason for this is unclear; those kings may have been forgotten, or there was no reason to remember them; we will return to the motivations and reasons behind these traditions below. In this section, I will start with discussing the various elements of Ragnar's story to consider their historical basis, or lack thereof. After that, I will consider the reason for the existence of these (mostly) fictional elements. Finally, I will consider the portrayal of Eric Bloodaxe in *Egils Saga*.

Of the account on Ragnar and his sons it may be established that there is no historical basis for Ragnar's expedition to Northumbria, nor for his dying in the snake-pit at the hands of Ælla.¹⁰¹ Alfred Smyth has demonstrated convincingly that many of the elements, such as Ragnar's reluctance to reveal his identity and the death in the snake-pit, were borrowed, or perhaps established *topoi*, from other sagas.¹⁰² Ragnar was, most likely, not a historical king but rather a warlord, dominating the Baltic sea;¹⁰³ he was portrayed as a king by Saxo Grammaticus

¹⁰⁰ This account was a summary of the parts found in: *Saga Egil Skallagrimsson*, chs. 36-38, 41, 43-45, 56-59, 61-63, 69, pp. 48-52, 56-63, 84-114, 125-126; Fell, *Egils Saga*, chs. 36-38, 41, 43-45, 56, 57, 59-61, 67, pp. 51-55, 59-65, 86-113, 124-125.

¹⁰¹ Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, p. 52.

¹⁰² Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, pp. 36-53. Most borrowing occurs from the *Völsungar saga*.

¹⁰³ McTurk, *Studies*, pp. 1-39.

whose purpose was to supply Denmark with a strong line of kings up to his own time.¹⁰⁴

Ivar is a historical figure, though he scarcely features in contemporary Anglo-Saxon sources, except in connection with the killing of King Edmund of East Anglia (870).¹⁰⁵ Irish sources, most notably the *Annals of Ulster*, reveal that he was active in Ireland from 851-864 and from 871 to his death in 873.¹⁰⁶ Æthelweard, in his *Chronicon* composed at the end of the tenth century, claims that the *here*, which arrived in 866, was led by a man called Inwær (*Iguuarus*);¹⁰⁷ likewise, Abbo of Fleury, a contemporary of Æthelweard, also mentions an ‘Inguar’, in connection with the *here*, who was accompanied by Hubba.¹⁰⁸ Because Hubba is one of Ivar’s brothers in certain sagas, it is likely that Abbo’s Inguar can be identified as Ivar. Smyth argues that all this refers to the same man, namely the Ivar from Ireland, because that one left Dublin in 863/864.

The portrayal of Ivar and his actions are either *topoi* or confused accounts of events which originally took place in Ireland, according to Smyth. Of the *topoi*, the account of the ox-hide is a good example, for it has been found in many different sources. Smyth argues that the founding of London or York in Northumbria by Ivar might refer to the founding of Dublin instead. The political dealings of Ivar with king Ælla parallels his dealings with the high-king Maelsechnaill

¹⁰⁴ Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, pp. 1-11, 17-33.

¹⁰⁵ Ivar’s involvement, and possibly that of his brother Ubbe, is not discussed in this chapter, for it does not relate to York, nor is Ivar one of the Viking kings. The reason Ivar is discussed at all is his relation to the capture of York in 866 and 867. Furthermore, we are concerned with later Scandinavian remembrance of the Viking kings, not of near-contemporary English views of the invaders; such an undertaking would merit a completely different project.

¹⁰⁶ Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, pp. 169-170, 234-238, 244; *The Annals of Ulster*, 851-864, 871, 873, in *The Annals of Ulster (to A.D. 1131), Part I: Text and Translation*, ed. by Seán Mac Airt and Gearóid Mac Niocaill (Dublin, 1983), pp. 314-321, 326-329.

¹⁰⁷ Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, bk. 4, in Campbell, p. 35. This source is introduced in chapter 5, see pp. 66-67.

¹⁰⁸ *Abbonis Floriacensis Passio Sancti Eadmundi*, in *Memorials of St. Edmund’s Abbey*, ed. by T. Arnold (Rolls Series; London 1890) vol. 1, p. 9 (‘Ex eorum ergo genere prædicti duces Inguar et Hubba, Northanimbrorum primitus aggressi expugnare provinciam, gravi depopulatione totam pervagantur ex ordine.’)

of Ireland.¹⁰⁹ Whether these observations are true or not, it seems clear to me that the account of how Ivar made peace with Ælla and how he, with Odysseus-like cleverness, conquered that kingdom belongs to the realm of traditions and legends.

Another episode from the saga needs to be addressed, namely the carving of the blood-eagle on Ælla's back. This may have a basis in Scandinavian practice. Smyth has argued that it was in fact a sacrifice, carried out by cutting away all of the ribs from the spine and ripping out the lungs.¹¹⁰ This meaning was lost in later sources, presumably because these writers were unfamiliar with the ritual. Smyth argues that 'originally (...) the mutilated corpse was itself made to resemble the spread-eagle saturated in gore (...).'¹¹¹ This practice is found in another Scandinavian source, the *Orkneyinga saga*,¹¹² and seems to have been a sacrifice of victory in honour of Odin. Smyth argues that this was the reason for the sacrifice, besides the disposal of the Northumbrian royal line.¹¹³

This short overview of the historical basis of different elements within the tradition of Ragnar and his sons may seem overly negative, dismissing every piece of tradition as fictional. However, what is interesting is where, and why, the tradition originated, for that reveals how a community came to terms with their past. Smyth has argued that the story of Ragnar and his

¹⁰⁹ The ox-hide story can be found in many different sources associated with many different persons. It can be found in *Historia regum Britanniae* by Geoffrey of Monmouth and in Layamon's *Brut*. The oldest account of it may well be found in Virgil's *Aeneid*, where Dido obtains the ground to found Carthage in this way; see: Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, pp. 175-177.

¹¹⁰ 'Létu þeir nú rista örn á baki Ellu ok skera síðan rifin öll frá hrygginum með sverði, svá at þar váru lungum dregin.', in *Þattr*, in *Fornaldur Sögur*, vol. 1, p. 298.

¹¹¹ Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, p. 190. Roberta Frank has argued instead that the blood-eagle statement is metaphorical, meaning that Ælla served as food for the blood-eagle, a traditional symbol of battle. See: Roberta Frank, 'Viking atrocity and verse: the rite of the blood-eagle', *English Historical Review* (1984), vol. 99, pp. 332-343; Roberta Frank, 'The Blood-Eagle again', *Saga-book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* (1986-1989), vol. 22, pp. 287-289.

¹¹² *Orkneyinga saga, Legenda de Sancto Magno, Magnúss saga skemmri, Magnúss saga lengri, Helga Þattr ok Úlfs*, ed. by F. Guðmundsson (Íslenzk Fornrit, vol. xxxiv; Reykjavík, 1965), p. 13.

¹¹³ Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, pp. 189-194. This interpretation has been supported by Bjarni Einarsson. See: Bjarni Einarsson, 'De Normannorum atrocitate, or on the execution of royalty by the Aquiline method', *Saga-book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* (1986-1989), vol. 22, pp. 79-82.

death in the snake-pit served as an explanation for the slaying of Ælla at the hands of Ivar. Smyth further agrees with the claim made by J. de Vries that the story was created by Scandinavians living in the area of the Danelaw in the eleventh century, for ‘this was the only region where a Scandinavian population would have felt the need at a later time to explain in such elaborate detail how Northumbria came to be conquered by the sons of Ragnar.’¹¹⁴

Therefore, the Danes living in England in the tenth century, seem to have made up a story of Ragnar being killed by Ælla, to explain why Ivar and his brothers came to Northumbria and brutally killed King Ælla. The blood-eagle sacrifice is excused by portraying it as Ivar’s revenge for his father’s death, the implication being that this horrible sacrifice was only reserved for certain occasions. If the story originated in the Danelaw in the eleventh-century, it indicates a need felt by the inhabitants to explain their bloody past, which had become even more relevant under the new Scandinavian kings, Swein and Cnut. The most obvious reason seems to be that the later inhabitants felt the need to legitimize the claim on England; therefore, they tried to explain that their forefathers had a legitimate reason to come to England and conquer the kingdom of Northumbria.

The purpose of the story of Ragnar and his sons was different for Saxo Grammaticus. For Saxo, the story was part of his larger narrative of a strong Danish royal line, which had enjoyed links with England for a long time of its history. The story of Ragnar and his sons functions as a simpler presentation of the invasion of England, providing the sagas and Saxo’s history with a clear narrative. Saxo’s account does not touch upon the question how the Viking kings were remembered; Ivar and his brothers are remembered as the Viking invaders of 866, who conquered great parts of England and murdered several English kings, and with whom started the Viking

¹¹⁴ Smyth, *Scandinavian Kings*, p. 52; J. de Vries, ‘Die westnordische Tradition der Sage von Ragnar Lodbrók’, *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* (1928), vol. 53, p. 262; J. de Vries, ‘Die Wikingersaga’, *Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift*, (1927), vol. 15, pp. 81-100.

age of England. The family of Ragnar and his sons were, in this case, part of the history of the Danish people, which is enough reason for Saxo to include them in his work.

Before moving on to *Egils saga*, we need to briefly address the use of the figure of Ælla in the Scandinavian sources, for Susanne Kries has argued recently that the fact that Ælla was remembered is also significant. According to her, Osberht was deliberately edited out in the later Scandinavian traditions, which assigned greater prominence to Ælla and titled him King of England, or Northumbria. In this way, Ælla came to personify the failure of Anglo-Saxon kingship in face of the Scandinavian invaders. Anglo-Saxon sources diminished Ælla's role and denoted him as a usurper, to counter the story of royal failure.¹¹⁵

Kries' observations are thought-provoking, even though her arguments fall short. Why would the Vikings use such an elaborate scheme to portray themselves as king-slayers and victors over a royal house? Ælla does occur more than any other Anglo-Saxon king in the Scandinavian traditions. Matthew Townend has shown that Ælla occurs mostly as an adversary to the Scandinavians in cases of confrontation between Anglo-Saxons and Scandinavians.¹¹⁶ However, the reason for the use of the name as explained by Kries is unsatisfactory. Matthew Townend has argued that the names of Anglo-Saxon kings, which survive in Skaldic verse, are often of those kings who 'impinged most strongly on the Scandinavian consciousness during the Viking Age itself.'¹¹⁷ Therefore, the reason for the prominence of Ælla is not due to a conscious manipulation of the past; it seems simpler: it must be sought in the capture of York. Ælla was the king who was ruling in York at the time when the Vikings came. By slaying Ælla, the Vikings conquered Northumbria; thus, logically, Ælla was the king who was remembered by the

¹¹⁵ Susanne Kries, "'Westwards I came across the Sea": Anglo-Scandinavian History through Scandinavian Eyes', *Leeds Studies in English* (2003), vol. 34, pp. 51, 55-56, 61, 67.

¹¹⁶ Matthew Townend, 'Ella: An Old English Name in Old Norse Poetry', *Nomina: Journal of the Society for Name Studies in Britain and Ireland* (1997), vol. 20, pp. 23-35.

¹¹⁷ Townend, 'Ella', p. 25.

Vikings.¹¹⁸

The story of Ragnar and his sons served different purposes for different people. Where the story in Saxo's work is part of a larger narrative of Danish kings, the sagas seem to have originated in the Danelaw. Presumably, the inhabitants felt the need to explain how York came to be conquered by their ancestors. Whereas the story reveals little about how the Viking kings were remembered, it nonetheless reveals social memory at work in creating a narrative of legitimization and origin. The latter is demonstrated very clearly by how Ælla was remembered and portrayed in Skaldic verse, for this illegitimate king came to personify the start of the Viking age. Thus, what seems to have been remembered longer than any other aspect of Viking age York, was the start of that age - the ending of a royal line and the arrival of a new dynasty.

Eric Bloodaxe: historical king or fictional character?

Having considered the historical basis of certain elements of Ragnar's story and the social reasons for the existence of that tradition, we now turn to the portrayal of Eric Bloodaxe in *Egils saga*. We will explore the historical basis of certain elements of the saga, while, at the same time, considering the reasons for the portrayal of Eric Bloodaxe.

Eric Bloodaxe is a historical king, but the question needs to be asked to what extent *Egils Saga* is a representation of the historical Eric Bloodaxe or whether he represents something different. In the saga, Eric Bloodaxe fulfils the role of an adversary to the main protagonist, Egil.¹¹⁹ The whole saga centres on the relationship between Egil's and Eric's family.¹²⁰ Eric, and his father Harold Fairhair, were the kings of Norway. As already noted above, the saga has to be

¹¹⁸ Townend, 'Ella', pp. 32-33.

¹¹⁹ On literary aspects and constructs of the saga, see Theodore M. Anderson, *The Icelandic Family Saga. An Analytic Reading* (London, 1967), pp. 97-110.

¹²⁰ Theodore M. Anderson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180-1280)* (Ithica and London, 2006), pp. 102-108.

read in the light of the thirteenth-century Icelandic quest for independence, which found its way into the saga as the main theme.¹²¹ It is an example of social memory at work, for the saga narrates history relevant to the social situation at the time of composition.¹²²

There are other historical elements found in the saga. It has been accepted that Egil is, in fact, a historical figure. On the topic of historical elements, Christine Fell has concluded: ‘what is clear is that the historical picture presented by *Egils saga* is consistent with the history on which thirteenth-century Iceland was fed.’¹²³ Therefore, what we find in the saga is not historical accurateness, nor historical fact, but the historical idea of the period which existed in the thirteenth century in Iceland.

Eric Bloodaxe’s reign in Northumbria was remembered, though interpolated with a certainly fictional account of Athelstan granting Northumbria to him. Athelstan had died in 939, the king ruling England during Eric’s time at York was in fact Eadred. Presumably, the history of native Scandinavian kings would have been better preserved in Scandinavia than that of English kings, which again could be an example of social memory at work. However, Smyth has argued that the author of the saga deliberately stretched Athelstan’s reign across the decades after his death because of Athelstan’s fame, which he had gained at *Brunanburh*. Therefore, Athelstan would be a better king to serve as part of the historical framework of the saga.¹²⁴ Whether the author deliberately re-wrote history, he does present Athelstan as a contrast to Eric, for Egil refuses to enter into the service of a Norwegian king but he does become retainer of Athelstan.¹²⁵

¹²¹ Anderson, *The Growth*, pp. 109-118; also see above, pp. 24-25. Cf.: Patricia Pires Boulhosa, *Icelanders and the Kings of Norway. Medieval Sagas and Legal Texts* (Leiden, 2005), pp.154-209.

¹²² Byock, ‘Social Memory’, pp. 301-303, 314. See also above, pp. 16-18.

¹²³ Fell, *Egils Saga*, p. xi.

¹²⁴ Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol 2, pp. 168-169.

¹²⁵ *Saga Egil Skallagrimsson*, ch. 50, pp. 71-72; Fell, *Egils Saga*, ch. 50, p. 74; Hines, ‘Kingship in *Egils saga*’, p. 26. The reason for Egil’s willingness to become retainer to Athelstan may also be that England was, for Icelandic saga writers, a safe area; the kings of England did not threaten Iceland while the Norwegian kings did. The
(continued...)

Perhaps Athelstan's reign in the saga is extended because Egil had actually been a retainer of Athelstan; the extension of his reign may have been a simplification for narrative purposes.¹²⁶ In regard to this saga, it is very difficult to distinguish between what is a result of social memory and what is a result of the author's invention.

Another element in the saga is Egil's poetry. The poems may be authentic. This has been argued based on their complex structure; the form and metre are so complex that the poems had to be remembered in the form in which they survive.¹²⁷ However, there is, at times, reason to assume the poems were revised later, for instance the poems of a three-year Egil are more polished than one he allegedly composed at the age of six.¹²⁸ Christine Fell stresses that 'we need to remember that the art of Skaldic verse was an oral not a literate one, and that verses were composed in the emotions and stresses of the moment, not in tranquil recollection afterwards.'¹²⁹ She goes on to claim that the ones composed in those moment of stress show Egil at his best.¹³⁰

As a historian, I tend to be more sceptical about such claims. Fell gives as an example of Egil's 'technical control' the poem he utters before he kills Bard.¹³¹ Surely this was not written down at that precise moment. Egil must have had a moment of 'tranquil recollection' later, in order to write his poems down. Or he had a bard, or someone like Marcus Tullius Tiro, to accompany him.

¹²⁵(...continued)

latter observation is based on a personal comment made by Matthew Townend in a private conversation I had with him during my time at the University of York from October until December 2012.

¹²⁶ When discussing the simplification of the emigration from Norway to Iceland in *Egils saga*, Byock points out that social memory is a 'narrative tool', in which 'the past [is] in service of the present'. Who reigned when is not an issue in the saga, it focusses on the conflict, for that is what is important. See: Byock, 'Social Memory', p. 302.

¹²⁷ Rollason, *Sources*, pp. 33, 167-169.

¹²⁸ Fell, *Egils saga*, p. xvi-xvii.

¹²⁹ Fell, *Egils saga*, p. xvii.

¹³⁰ Fell, *Egils saga*, pp. xvi-xvii.

¹³¹ Fell, *Egils saga*, pp. xvi-xvii; Rollason, *Sources*, pp. 33, 169. On the killing of Bard, see above, p. 26.

The fact that the poems only came down to us in manuscripts of a much later date, gives further pause to accepting their authenticity. This is not the place for a complete survey of Egil's poetry, rather we will focus on the poem Egil recites in praise of king Eric, 'Head-Ransom'. The poem has generally been accepted as an authentic work of Egil. The earliest manuscript containing the poem dates from c. 1350, the so-called Wolfenbüttel manuscript, which is a minimum of 350 years after the poem was supposedly composed.¹³² Without involving too much of the manuscript context, it is enough to observe that the poem does not exist in the same form in every surviving manuscript containing the work.¹³³ There are two branches of the manuscript tradition: the first branch is the Wolfenbüttel manuscript, the second is found in a group of seventeenth-century manuscripts. In the different manuscripts, the 'Head-Ransom' poem exhibits some variations, most notably in verses 13-18, not only in wording but also in content.¹³⁴ What is important to conclude here is that, despite the textual difficulties, most linguists and historians agree that 'head-ransom' is an authentic work of Egil.¹³⁵

If we accept the authenticity of the 'head-ransom' poem, it could mean that Egil actually went to the court of Eric and recited the poem there. Given the fact that Egil's direct descendants composed the saga, this may not be far from the truth. John Hines has demonstrated, based on the contents of the poem alone, that it is indeed likely that the poem was recited at York for king Eric, though he points out that it has been generally accepted that the head-ransom episode is

¹³² The manuscript is in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel, shelf-number: Cod. Guelf. 9. 10 Aug. 4^o; see: Otto v. Heinemann, *Die Augusteischen Handschriften* (Die Augusteischen Handschriften 4; Frankfurt, 1900), p. 148.

¹³³ John Hines, 'Egill's *Höfuðlausn* in time and place', *Saga-book of the Viking Society for Northern Research* (1994-1997), vol. 24, pp. 85-89

¹³⁴ Hines, 'Egill's *Höfuðlausn*', pp. 85-89.

¹³⁵ Hines, 'Egill's *Höfuðlausn*', pp. 85-89; Rollason, *Sources*, pp. 33, 169; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 324. A different view is articulated by Jón Helgason who argued that the poem is a thirteenth-century interjection, see: Jón Helgason, 'Höfuðlausnarhjal', in *Einarsbók: Afmælikveðja til Einars Ól. Sveinssonar 12. desember 1969*, ed. by Guðnason and others, pp. 156-176.

fictitious.¹³⁶ The latter observation would mean that Egil wouldn't have had to fear for his life while he was reciting his work. What can be concluded, then, is that Egil composed a poem for King Eric, though in what circumstances remains difficult to reconstruct; the compiler of the saga may have used it deliberately for the confrontation scene at York.

Smyth has distilled several other historical facts from the contents of *Egils saga*. According to Smyth, it is clear that Eric's position in York was fragile, for, according to the saga, he had secured himself in a locked hall with guards, his advisor Arinbjorn lived outside of the royal household, and his wife claims Eric is weaker than all other kings.¹³⁷ Smyth is drawing conclusions for which there is little evidence. Eric's wife, Gunnhild, plays a considerable part in the saga in which she criticises her husband on several occasions.¹³⁸ Furthermore, Eric had lost his kingdom in Norway, which would be a satisfying explanation for her remark. The fact that Eric dined in a hall with guards, seems simply a conventional presentation of a king with his retainers; furthermore, it is the stage for Eric's recital. Lastly, Arinbjorn must live outside the king's hall, for the story needs Egil to be able to contact his best friend. Smyth's reasoning is a good example of his source criticism when it comes to the Scandinavian sagas.

Having considered several elements of Eric's portrayal, it is clear that the saga, instead of presenting a clear picture of the historical Eric Bloodaxe, portrays Eric as an adversary in an epic saga. While many historical features are confused in the saga, for instance the reign of Athelstan or the account of the battle at Brunanburh,¹³⁹ we have here a narrative about the history of the Icelandic settlers. They felt the need to narrate their past, with one of the most famous Icelandic poets in the lead. The saga presents a story of a battle for independence, set within a

¹³⁶ Hines, 'Egill's *Höfuðlausn*', pp. 83-85, 87-89, 97-103.

¹³⁷ Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 2, p. 170.

¹³⁸ *Saga Egil Skallagrímsson*, chs. 48, 57, p. 68, 89; Fell, *Egils saga*, chs. 48, 56 pp. 71, 92.

¹³⁹ This is said to have taken place at Vin Moor (*Vínheiðdr*) and the Irish king Olaf Cuaran is dubbed king of the Scots.

historical framework and, possibly, it was meant to inspire the generation for whom the saga was written. Viewed this way, it is not surprising that the saga is slightly confused on Anglo-Saxon history, for it was not concerned with that history; nor was it concerned with traditions on Anglo-Scandinavian York. Eric Bloodaxe features in the saga not because he was king of York, but because he was part of the dynasty ruling Norway.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the representation of the Viking kings of York in later Scandinavian sources. From the exploration of the sources, several conclusions can be drawn. One is that the Viking kings did not give rise to a great Scandinavian tradition about their activities and lives. Where one might expect great tales of yore about the forefathers of the Scandinavians and their achievements, one is met with only scraps of traditions. The story of Ragnar Lothbrok and his sons originated in England rather than Scandinavia. This origin can logically be explained by the fact that the Scandinavians, living in the Danelaw during the Viking age, felt the need to understand their past and explain their current situation. Thus, a coherent story of how their forefathers came to conquer, and live in, England came into existence. The fact that Swein and Cnut reigned in England in the eleventh century may be a reason for the existence of the story, which created continuity between these new Scandinavian kings and the ones that had ruled York in the past. In this way, history was reappropriated to give meaning to the present.

The other York Viking king that occurs in Scandinavian sources, Eric Bloodaxe, features as a character in a saga centred on Scandinavia rather than England. Eric features in *Egils Saga* because he was king of Norway, not because he was king of York - though it was remembered Eric was, at a certain point, king at York. The saga is very interesting of its own accord, revealing a tradition on Eric Bloodaxe but in an Icelandic setting.

At the beginning of this chapter, I introduced the concept of social memory. The later traditions which have been discussed in this chapter, must be viewed with that concept in mind. The kings of Viking age York were little remembered in later written traditions, because they lacked relevance for the present. In addition, what may have contributed to the lack of traditions on the Jorvik kings is the fact that Scandinavian sagas are mainly of Icelandic origin; for Icelandic people, England had never been part of their history. What must be stressed is that the fact that so few traditions have come down to us, does not mean that they never existed.¹⁴⁰ The kingdom of York had lost its direct relevance for later generations, explaining the absence of it in written sources, but that does not mean it never had any relevance.

¹⁴⁰ Matthew Townend has written an article in which he considers the Skaldic poetry for the Vikings kings of York and Dublin in which he stresses the same observation. Even though the kings were not remembered, there are hints, in Townend's view, that Skaldic verse once was composed in honour of the Vikings kings of York and Dublin. See: Townend, 'Whatever happened to York Viking Poetry', pp. 48-90.

Chapter 3: Viking Age York in Anglo-Norman Sources

In this chapter we will explore how Viking age York was depicted by later Anglo-Norman authors. These authors are extremely interesting in how they came to terms with the past, for most of them relate the Anglo-Saxon past while the rulers of England were of Norman origin. Through these histories, continuity was created on the part of the Norman rulers.

I will start with a discussion of all the sources in question, briefly introducing the most important aspects of every source. After that, I will analyse the additions made by the sources to the contemporary, Anglo-Saxon, sources. Rather than going through all the additions, one can find a table in the appendix where the additions and differences are set out in comparison to annals taken from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle or the *Historia regum I*.¹⁴¹ After this general analysis, I will discuss two authors in fuller detail. The first is William of Malmesbury, who will be studied with regard to his portrayal of the Viking kingdom of York and information he reveals on King Athelstan. The other is Geffrei Gaimar, who supplied us with an unique tradition concerning the fall of York in 866 and 867.

The main focus of this survey will be how the Viking kingdom of York is presented, if at all, in these works. Similar to the previous chapter, the concept of social memory is important. At the end of this chapter, I will explore the reasons these authors had to portray the Viking kingdom the way they did.

¹⁴¹ The table can be found in Appendix II, pp. 144-163. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is introduced in the next chapter, see pp. 64-65. The *Historia regum I* is introduced below, see pp. 42-45.

Introduction to the sources

The main sources under consideration in this chapter are the *Historia regum* II, Symeon's *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius hoc est Dunelmensis ecclesie*, John of Worcester's *Chronicon ex chronicis*, William of Malmesbury's *De gestis regum Anglorum libri quinque*, Geffrei Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engleis*, Roger of Howden's *Chronica*, and Roger of Wendover's *Chronica siue flores historiarum*. I will briefly introduce these sources in the order in which they are listed above; the focus will be on providing the reader with essential information. While the textual history of all these sources are of the utmost importance, we are not concerned with those aspects in this chapter.

Before considering the *Historia regum* II and Symeon's *Libellus*, we will first address the place, Durham, where these texts were produced, as well as the most important person, Symeon, associated with these sources. The community at Durham traced its origin to Lindisfarne, the Holy Island associated with Cuthbert. In face of the threat of the *here* of 866, the monks of Lindisfarne took to wandering the countryside to find a safer home for their saint; they settled at Chester-le-Street. However, in 995, they would again move to another location due to the renewed Viking attacks, which brought them to Durham. The Norman Conquest brought troubles to the north of England which did not leave Durham unaffected. It brought renewed stress on Benedictine monasticism, which led the bishop of the community, William of St Calais (c. 1083-1096) to replace the Durham clerks in 1083 with the Benedictine monks from Monkwearmouth and Jarrow.¹⁴² This history of Durham is contained within the *Libellus*, which most likely

¹⁴² David Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution to Historical Writing', in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 1-2, 5; David Rollason (ed. and trans.), *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius, hoc est Dunhelmensis, ecclesie, Tract on the Origins and Progress of this the Church of Durham* (Oxford, 2000), pp. lxxxii (whole intro: xvi-xcv). On the impact and extent of the replacement, whether this must be seen as a conflict or not and whether the whole community was replaced, see: W. M. Aird, 'The political context of the *Libellus de Exordio*', in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 32-45.

expressed the views of the whole community.¹⁴³

Within the community of Durham an important place was reserved for Symeon. Symeon's career has been carefully reconstructed by recent historians, most notably Michael Gullick. Symeon came from northern France or Normandy. He travelled to England with bishop William of St Calais, who had been exiled to Normandy from 1088 to 1091. Symeon began working as a scribe at Durham in the 1090s, establishing his reputation as an outstanding scholar. Between 1115 and 1129 he supervised other scribes and the production of new manuscripts. He was the precentor of the community, though the exact date he received this office is unclear; Michael Gullick has suggested it took place before 1126. Symeon died c. 1129.¹⁴⁴

Durham was a centre of preservation and the making of history. Several historians have now convincingly demonstrated that Durham was a scholarly centre in the north of England where many different manuscripts containing material relating to the history of England have originated.¹⁴⁵ Among these works are, besides the *Libellus*, the *Historia regum*, the *De primo Saxonum aduentu*,¹⁴⁶ and the *Series regum Northymbrensiū*.¹⁴⁷ As precentor and supervisor of the scriptorium, Symeon may have played a role in the production of these works.

Now, it is time to consider the different historical works which are central to this chapter. We will start with the works associated with, or attributed to, Symeon and Durham, the first being the *Historia regum*, the second the *Libellus*. After these, we will move on to the other

¹⁴³ Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution', p. 2-3.

¹⁴⁴ Michael Gullick, 'The Hand of Symeon of Durham: Further Observations on the Durham Martyrology Scribe', in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 14, 18-22; Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution', pp. 2-4.

¹⁴⁵ A. J. Piper, 'The Historical Interest of the Monks of Durham', in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 301-332; Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution', 5-13.

¹⁴⁶ Possible 11th century Durham provenance; see: Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution', p. 11.

¹⁴⁷ CUL Ff.1.27, possible Durham provenance, 12th century. See: Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution', p. 11. For an overview of the manuscripts in which Symeon's own hand appears, see: Gullick, 'The Hand of Symeon', pp. 14-31.

works central to this chapter.

The *Historia regum* is a collection of different historical parts from diverse sources. Here we will discuss the *Historia regum* as a whole, and define, as well as discuss, the two different sections important for this thesis. Though the *Historia regum* I bears no direct relevance to this chapter, it will be important in the next. The whole work is preserved in only one manuscript, which is dated to the third quarter of the 12th century.¹⁴⁸ The manuscript is a composite which is made up from several texts, of which the *Historia regum* is item seven;¹⁴⁹ most of the texts relate to Durham. While a Durham provenance of the manuscript has never been proven beyond doubt, Joanna Story has recently made a very good case for a Durham origin through an examination of several sections in the manuscript; scholars now tend to agree on the Durham origin as well as on Symeon's involvement in editing the manuscript.¹⁵⁰

The *Historia regum* itself consists of nine different sections, as identified by Peter Hunter Blair,¹⁵¹ which are divided as follows:

‘(1) Kentish legends relating to the seventh and eighth centuries; (2) an account of the kings of Northumbria from the mid-sixth century until 737; (3) material from the *Ecclesiastical History* mainly relating to Bede; (4) annals from 732 to 802 from a lost Northumbrian source; (5) annals from 849 to 887, mainly from

¹⁴⁸ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 139.

¹⁴⁹ Peter Hunter Blair, ‘Some Observations on the ‘*Historia Regum*’ Attributed to Symeon of Durham’, in *Celt and Saxon. Studies in the Early British Border*, ed. by Nora K. Chadwick *et al.* (Cambridge, 1963), p. 76; Joanna E. Story, ‘Symeon as Annalist’, in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), n. 32.

¹⁵⁰ Story, ‘Symeon’, pp. 202-213, n. 12, 31. Cf.: Christopher Northon, ‘History, Wisdom and Illumination’, in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), p. 87; B. Meehan, ‘A Reconsideration of the Historical Works associated with Symeon of Durham: Manuscripts, Texts and Influences’ (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1979). Other places of provenance which have been suggested are Sawley, Hexham, and Fountains, see: Story, ‘Symeon’, n. 33.

¹⁵¹ Blair, ‘Some Observations’, p. 76-118.

Asser's *Life of King Alfred*; (6) annals from 888 to 957 which in their present form are later than 1042; (7) extracts from the *Gesta Regum* of William of Malmesbury; (8) annals from 848 to 1118, based mainly on the Worcester chronicle but also partly derived from the *Libellus*, Eadmer's *Historia Novorum*, Dudo of St Quentin and William of Jumièges; (9) annals from 1119 to 1129.¹⁵²

The division of the *Historia regum* into two parts, as is done in this thesis, is mostly a practical one. Up to and including section six, which make up the first part, the work presents a chronology, except for the Kentish legends and the excerpts from Bede.¹⁵³ If these two sections are taken out, the manuscripts present a chronicle up to 957. Furthermore, a single author may have compiled sections one to five in the early tenth century.¹⁵⁴ Michael Lapidge and Cyril Hart have convincingly shown that it was Byrhtferth of Ramsey (c.970-c.1020) who compiled these sections.¹⁵⁵ Section six underwent later amendments, though it is still based, in its core, on contemporary material.¹⁵⁶ Most interesting of the *Historia regum* I, are the annals from 732 to 802, titled the *York Annals* by Peter Hunter Blair and Joanna Story,¹⁵⁷ which testify to a now lost northern annalistic work. In the next chapter, the last two sections of the *HR* I will be important.

For this chapter, we need to consider sections seven to nine, which constitute the *Historia*

¹⁵² Blair, 'Some Observations', pp. 76-118. The outline is taken from: Antonia Gransden, *Historical Writing in England c. 550 to c. 1307* (London, 1974), p. 149.

¹⁵³ Blair, 'Some Observations', pp. 83-86. Blair argued to view sections 1-5 as separate from the rest of the work; however, for practical reasons set out in my main texts I prefer to view, and call, sections 1-6 as *Historia regum* I; see Blair, 'Some Observations', pp. 115-116.

¹⁵⁴ Blair, 'Some Observations', pp. 78-106.

¹⁵⁵ Cyril Hart, 'Byrhtferth's Northumbrian chronicle', *The English Historical Review* (1982), vol. 97, no. 384, pp. 558-582; Michael Lapidge, 'Byrhtferth of Ramsey and the early sections of the *Historia Regum* attributed to Symeon of Durham', *Anglo-Saxon England* (1981), vol. 10, pp. 97-122; Rollason, *Libellus*, p. xlix.

¹⁵⁶ Blair, 'Some Observations', pp. 78-106; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 150; Rollason, *Sources*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁷ Blair, 'Some Observations', pp. 98-99, 117; Joanna E. Story, *Carolingian Connections. Anglo-Saxon England and Carolingian France, c. 750-870* (Aldershot, 2003), pp. 97-104.

regum II. It documents the history from King Alfred up to 1129. Similar to the first part, it has undergone editing which most likely took place at Durham. Section nine is the only section which contains unique information; it is now held that Symeon wrote this section.¹⁵⁸ Joanna Story has argued Symeon had a hand in compiling the *Historia regum* as a whole, as he had in compiling the manuscript, probably in his position as precentor and supervisor of the scriptorium.¹⁵⁹

The other work associated with Symeon is the *Libellus*, which was most likely written by the man himself. Besides being attributed to him in one of the later manuscripts,¹⁶⁰ scholars have made a very strong case for Symeon's authorship based on a variety of evidence, among others paleographical.¹⁶¹ The *Libellus* is concerned with the history of the Church of Durham. It was written between 1104 and 1107 and the two earliest manuscripts are near-contemporary, which makes it a very special and valuable source.¹⁶² Symeon's sources were Bede's works (mostly the *Historia ecclesiastica gentis Anglorum* and the prose *Vita S. Cuthberti*), Cuthbert's *Epistola de obitu Bedae*, a lost northern based annalistic work used in combination with *Historia regum*, the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, a letter by William of Saint-Calais to the monks of Durham, a list of monks of Durham, the *Cronica monasterii Dunelmensis*, the *De miraculis et translationibus sancti Cuthberti*, and, finally, oral tradition.¹⁶³ The history must be seen as a

¹⁵⁸ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 149; Rollason, *Libellus*, pp. xlix; Rollason, *Sources*, p. 27.

¹⁵⁹ Story, 'Symeon as Annalist', pp. 209-213; Rollason, *Libellus*, pp. xlii-xliii, xlvi-l.

¹⁶⁰ CUL Ff.1.27.

¹⁶¹ Gullick, 'The Hand of Symeon', pp. 14-31; Michael Gullick, 'The scribes of the Durham Cantor's Book (Durham, Dean and Chapter Library, MS B.IV.24) and the Durham Martyrology scribe', in *Anglo-Norman Durham: 1093-1193*, ed. by David Rollason, Margaret Harvey and Michael Prestwich (Suffolk, 1994) pp. 108-109; David Rollason, 'The Making of the *Libellus de Exordio*: the Evidence of Erasures and Alterations in the Two Earliest Manuscripts', in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), p. 140.

¹⁶² Michael Gullick, 'The Two Earliest Manuscripts of the *Libellus de Exordio*', in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 106-119; Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution', pp. 3, 6. The two earliest manuscripts are DUL, MS Cosin V.II. 6 and BL, MS Cotton Faustina A.v, fols. 25-98.

¹⁶³ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 117; Rollason, *Libellus*, pp. lxviii-lxxxvi.

continuation of a Northumbrian tradition in relation to St. Cuthbert. This is mainly embodied in the tenth-century *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, thus presenting a continuum in the tradition of St Cuthbert. Besides that, as noted above, the work is a reflection of the troubles of Symeon's own time, presenting a narrative of the history and authority of the Durham community through which the lands and rights of the monastery were affirmed.¹⁶⁴

The reason for the composition of the *Libellus* has been sought in the political circumstances of the age. The *Libellus* has been interpreted as a history which created a continuity between pre- and post-1083, presenting the replacement of the clergy of Durham by William of St Calais as renovation instead of a drastic event.¹⁶⁵ Another possible reason for the writing of the *Libellus* was a tension between the community and their bishop Ranulf Flambard (1099-1128), who used his position for personal gain to the detriment of the Durham community. Flambard appropriated lands from the community, which had been granted by William of St Calais. W. M. Aird has argued that the *Libellus* must be read in the context of this conflict, where the work must be seen as 'part of an attempt to define more clearly the rights and claims of the monastic community in the face of a very real threat to their corporate existence posed by their new bishop.'¹⁶⁶ Both reasons for writing the *Libellus* are examples of social memory, for the community utilized the past to give meaning to their present.

Having considered the historical works with close connections to the community of St Cuthbert at Durham, we will now consider the remaining Anglo-Norman chronicles central to this chapter, starting with John of Worcester. John was a benedictine monk who compiled his

¹⁶⁴ Aird, 'The Political Context', p. 32-45; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 116-120; Piper, 'Historical Interests', pp. 302-305; Rollason, *Sources*, pp. 25-26; Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution', pp. 4-5.

¹⁶⁵ A. J. Piper, 'The First Generations of Durham Monks and the Cult of St Cuthbert', in *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. by Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Suffolk, 1989) pp. 437-446; Piper, 'The Historical Interests', pp. 301-305; Rollason, 'Symeon's Contribution', p. 5; Rollason, *Libellus*, p. lxxxvi.

¹⁶⁶ Aird, 'The Political Context', p. 32-45 (p. 44).

Chronicon in the early twelfth century at the behest of the bishop of that town, Wulfstan.¹⁶⁷ The *Chronicon* relates the events from Creation up to 1140, focussing on England from 450 onwards. The work used to be attributed to a man of the same community, named Florence, based on an annal containing information about him, but it has been adequately proven that it was written by John.¹⁶⁸ Six manuscripts survive; however, these all go back to a single ‘working’ manuscript, written and edited by John himself.¹⁶⁹ The annals in this work up to 1016 can be described as a ‘careful patchwork of existing texts’.¹⁷⁰ In composing his work, John drew mainly from a now lost version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which ended in 1130. Furthermore, John was particularly inspired by Bede’s work *De Temporibus* and a universal chronicle composed by an Irish monk named Marianus Scotus. John used the latter to complement the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle when it proved lacking in relation to continental affairs.¹⁷¹ John’s chronicle represents a revival of the earlier Anglo-Saxon tradition of contemporary historiography, for the entries from 1100 onward were added sporadically testifying to the keeping of annals. Like the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles, John can be said to have had a pro-English bias.¹⁷²

Another Anglo-Norman chronicler was William of Malmesbury, whose *Gesta regum* is one of the best-known sources of Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman history. William was born c. 1095 near Malmesbury to an English mother and a Norman father. At an early age, he entered the monastery of Malmesbury. Ultimately, he became the precentor of Malmesbury, refusing the

¹⁶⁷ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 143-144; P. McGurk, ‘Worcester, John of (fl. 1095–1140)’, in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48309>, accessed 28 Dec 2012].

¹⁶⁸ R. R. Darlington (ed.), P. McGurk (ed. and trans.), and Jennifer Bray (trans.), *The Chronicle of John of Worcester. Volume II the annals from 450 TO 1066* (Oxford, 1995), pp. xvii-xviii; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 143-144; McGurk, ‘Worcester, John of (fl. 1095–1140)’.

¹⁶⁹ Darlington, *The Chronicle*, p. xxi-xxxv; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 146; McGurk, ‘Worcester, John of (fl. 1095–1140)’. The ms in question: Oxford, CCC MS 157.

¹⁷⁰ Darlington, *The Chronicle*, p. lxxix.

¹⁷¹ Darlington, *The Chronicle*, pp. xvii-xx, lxxix-lxxxii.

¹⁷² Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 147; Rollason, *Sources*, p. 29.

position of abbot.¹⁷³ William was an ardent student of both classical and Christian literature, though he seems to have been particularly fond of the pagan classics.¹⁷⁴ As a scholar, William reveals himself a master of a wide range of sources from which he was able to compose new, original, works, while, at the same time, critically assessing his sources through close examination of the material available. His writings are characterized by an eloquent style and excellent control of the Latin language when compared with contemporaries.¹⁷⁵

The *Gesta regum* was finished, in its earliest version, in 1125.¹⁷⁶ It was commissioned by Queen Mathilda, who would never see its completion, for she died in 1118.¹⁷⁷ William revised his work on several occasions.¹⁷⁸ The *Gesta regum* was concerned with the history of England from the mid-fifth century to 1125. William refrained from using an annalistic approach akin to most of his examples on Anglo-Saxon history, preferring instead to present his reader with a narrative history. In constructing this narrative from the earlier sources available to him, William, at times, did not shy away from adding content of his invention.¹⁷⁹ William was also inspired by Bede, whom he may have viewed as a role model, by biographical traditions, such as Asser's *Life of Alfred*, as well as saint's lives. William was rather unimpressed by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, which he regarded as inferior and hardly worth the title of history. Still, he borrowed

¹⁷³ Rodney Thomson, *William of Malmesbury* (Bury St. Edmunds, 1987), pp. 2-3; R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom, *Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings, volume II: General Introduction and Commentary* (Oxford, 1999), pp. xxxvi-xxxviii.

¹⁷⁴ Thomson, *William*, pp. 7, 11-14, 26-32.

¹⁷⁵ Thomson, *William*, pp. 8, 16-23; Thomson, *Gesta Regum*, pp. xxxviii-xliii, xlv-xlvi. On the sources available to him, see the brilliant study by Rodney Thomson: Thomson, *William*, pp. 39-75, 197-207.

¹⁷⁶ Thomson, *Gesta Regum*, pp. xxii, xxiv; Thomson, *William*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁷ Thomson raised the possibility that Mathilda also was the patron who made possible William's journey to different monasteries to collect books and traditions for his work. See: Thomson, *William*, pp. 4, 14-16, 33, 35.

¹⁷⁸ Thomson, *Gesta Regum*, pp. xvii-xxxv; Thomson, *William*, pp. 4-5.

¹⁷⁹ Concerning William's inventions, Thomson wrote: 'Modern scholars have sometimes criticised William of Malmesbury for utilizing this faculty [his own imagination], apparently regarded by them as the exclusive preserve of our own age. But William was attempting to reconstruct the past on his own account, not to provide raw materials for its reconstruction by modern scholars.' See: Thomson, *Gesta Regum*, p. xlii, n. 73.

heavily from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle - after all it was one of the main sources for Anglo-Saxon History.¹⁸⁰

Thomson and Winterbottom have stressed that William's perspective was an English one, for his work was titled *De gestis regum Anglorum*.¹⁸¹ William seems to have viewed the Anglo-Saxons as inferior to the Normans, who were superior in military activities and restored the English church. Antonia Gransden has noted that the portrayal of the inferiority of the Anglo-Saxons sometimes clashed with William's objective to present the Normans with worthy predecessors and in showing a continuity of the English church.¹⁸² The title suggests William viewed Norman England as a legitimate continuity of Anglo-Saxon England. William's work is a testament to a Norman view of the Anglo-Saxon past, especially given the popularity of the *Gesta regum*.¹⁸³

A distinctly different work is Geffrei Gaimar's *Lestoire des Engleis*, which is the first surviving French chronicle, written c. 1135-1140.¹⁸⁴ Gaimar's work is special for reasons besides the use of the vernacular language, for it was written for an aristocratic audience living in Lincolnshire. Gaimar wrote his work for a woman named Constance, wife of Ralf Fitz Gilbert, who was a landholder in Hampshire and Lincolnshire. Gaimar himself may have been a secular

¹⁸⁰ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 172; Thomson, *William*, pp. 15-18, 33, 66-70. William seems to have had access to a copy of the Peterborough, E, chronicle, see: Thomson, *William*, p. 70.

¹⁸¹ Thomson, *Gesta Regum*, p. 4.

¹⁸² Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 173-174.

¹⁸³ Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 178-180; Rollason, *Sources*, p. 30; Thomson, *William*, p. 37.

¹⁸⁴ Alexander Bell, who published an edition of the text in 1960, argued for a date near the end of the period 1135-1140. Ian Short has argued for a date between March 1136 and April 1137. Paul Dalton has argued instead for a point in the period c. 1141-1150. See: Alexander Bell (ed.), *L'Estoire des Engleis by Geffrei Gaimar*, (Anglo-Norman Text Society 14-16; Oxford, 1960), p. liii; Paul Dalton, 'The date of Geoffrey Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engleis*, the connections of his patrons, and the politics of Stephen's reign,' *The Chaucer Review* (2007), vol. 42, no. 1, pp. 23-47; Ian Short, 'Gaimar's Epilogue and Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Liber vestustissimus*', *Speculum* (1994), vol 69, p. 324; Ian Short, 'Patrons and Polyglots: French Literature in Twelfth-Century England', *Anglo-Norman Studies* (1992), vol. 14, p. 244.

clerk familiar with life within an aristocratic court.¹⁸⁵ His work shows a particular concern with northern affairs. The recent editor, Ian Short, has argued that this derives from the fact that there was still a genuine interest in Scandinavian affairs on the part of the patrons and audience, which must have been a mixture of Anglo-Saxons, Scandinavians, and Normans.¹⁸⁶ Lincolnshire had been part of the Danelaw, therefore a portion of the population may be expected to have been Scandinavian. Gaimar had to appease the taste of this, partly, Scandinavian audience.

The reputation of the *L'Estoire des Engleis* has not fared well in regard to its historical aspects. Gaimar does not shy away from inventing material and adding details, presumably to please his patrons. While his history up to 954 is based on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,¹⁸⁷ Gaimar invents dialogue to spice things up. Still, Short argues that Gaimar constructed a 'conscientious historical narrative'.¹⁸⁸ Other historians have not been so forgiving of Gaimar's inventions. David Rollason argues that it has scarcely any historical value, for Gaimar simply inserted 'stories and legends of doubtful historical value'.¹⁸⁹ It is true that Gaimar seems to have added stories which either circulated orally or were invented by himself, but these stories and legends are of great interest because these may reveal social memory at work.

Another Norman chronicle was written by Roger of Hoveden. Roger was a clerk at the court of Henry II for whom he undertook several diplomatic missions. After the death of the king in 1189, Roger remained closely involved with the politics of the time, joining the service of Hugh du Puiset, the bishop of Durham (1153-1195). Roger remained active in the theatre of diplomacy, which is attested by his diplomatic mission to Pope Clement III on behalf of the

¹⁸⁵ Dalton, 'The date' p. 23.

¹⁸⁶ Ian Short (ed. and trans.), *Geffrei Gaimar, Estoire des Engleis/History of the English* (Oxford, 2009), pp. ix-x.

¹⁸⁷ Most likely the northern recension, see: Short, *Geffrei*, p. ix.

¹⁸⁸ Short, *Geffrei*, p. ix.

¹⁸⁹ Rollason, *Sources*, p. 32.

Durham church, as well as by his involvement with Richard III in the Holy Land in 1189 and 1190. During his lifetime, Roger wrote two chronicles, the *Gesta Henrici II Benedicti abbatis* and the *Chronica*.¹⁹⁰ Here, we are here concerned with the latter.

Roger had started working on the *Chronica* before 1192.¹⁹¹ It is a compilation of the history from Bede up to 1201 and survives in near-contemporary manuscripts, partly written in the hand of the author himself.¹⁹² Up to 1192, Roger drew his material mainly from the *Historia post obitum Bedae*, a compilation from Durham which contained mainly extracts from the *Historia regum*, and Henry of Huntingdon's *Historia Anglorum*, as well as using his own chronicle on Henry II.¹⁹³ From 1192 to 1201 the work contains original material.¹⁹⁴ It has been recognised as important for its content after 1148, while before that date Roger seems to have rehashed material found in the sources outlined above, though there is a marked northern interest, which may derive from the Durham compilation. Roger was mainly concerned with royal government, which is not surprising given his background.¹⁹⁵ Even given the scarce historical information available in Roger's work, it is a testimony not only to a remarkable individual closely involved with the politics of his age, but also to the enthusiasm of chroniclers of the Anglo-Norman period as well as to their continued interest in Anglo-Saxon history.

The last Norman chronicle to be considered was written by a namesake of Roger of

¹⁹⁰ David Corner, 'Howden, Roger of (d. 1201/2)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13880>, accessed 28 Dec 2012].

¹⁹¹ David Corner, 'The Earliest Surviving Manuscripts of Roger of Howden's 'Chronica'', *English Historical Review* (1983), vol. 98, no. 387, pp. 303-304, 310. The authorship of Roger is unquestioned, for an early manuscript (BM MS. Arundel 69) of the work contains the title 'Incipiunt Chronica Magistri Goeri de Houedene'. Two other manuscripts (BM MS. Arundel 150 and Hatfield MS.) contain a similar title, see: Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 226.

¹⁹² Corner, 'The Earliest Surviving Manuscripts', pp. 297-310; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 225-226. The manuscripts in question are: British Library Royal MS 14.C.2 and Bodleian Library Laud MS 582.

¹⁹³ Corner, 'Howden, Roger of (d. 1201/2)'; Corner, 'The Earliest Surviving Manuscripts', pp. 303-304; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 224-225; Rollason, *Sources*, p. 32.

¹⁹⁴ Corner, 'The Earliest Surviving Manuscripts', p. 303.

¹⁹⁵ Corner, 'Howden, Roger of (d. 1201/2)'; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 225-226, 229-230; Rollason, *Sources*, p. 32.

Hoveden, namely Roger of Wendover. He was a monk at St Albans before becoming the prior of Belvoir, an office which he failed to hold on to. He died a monk at St Albans in 1236.¹⁹⁶ Roger wrote a work entitled *Flores historiarum* in the early thirteenth century, most likely between 1220 and 1236.¹⁹⁷ The work can be divided into three sections: the first covers the period from the Creation until 1202; the second narrates the history from 1202 almost to the end of the reign of King John (119-1216); the third contains mostly unique information.¹⁹⁸ Only the first section is of interest to us. It is a compilation of earlier sources, among others Bede, Henry of Huntingdon, and Roger of Hoveden.¹⁹⁹ Roger may have had access to a lost northern annalistic work for the eighth and ninth centuries, making his work valuable for the Anglo-Saxon historian.²⁰⁰ On the additions by Roger, doubts have been raised; it is possible that Roger invented certain parts of his history.²⁰¹ Such content should not be dismissed so quickly, for it may reveal, again, social memory at work. In the work in general, Roger was preoccupied with criticizing contemporary kings, mostly John (1119-1216) and Henry III (1216-1272), and with the influence of the popes in England.²⁰² Matthew Parker incorporated Wendover's work into his *Chronica majora*.²⁰³

With the description of Roger's *Flores historiarum*, we come to the end of the

¹⁹⁶ David Corner, 'Wendover, Roger of (d. 1236)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29040>, accessed 28 Dec 2012]; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 359.

¹⁹⁷ Corner, 'Wendover, Roger of (d. 1236)'. The work survives, without being part of Matthew Paris' *Chronica majora*, in the following manuscripts: Bodl. Oxf, MS Douce 207 and BL, Cotton MS Otho B.v. However, this must be corroborated with the first two of the three original manuscripts of the *Chronica majora*, Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 26 and Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 16, as well as the first abridged version of Parker's work: BL, Cotton MS Vitellius A.xx.

¹⁹⁸ Corner, 'Wendover, Roger of (d. 1236)'.

¹⁹⁹ Corner, 'Wendover, Roger of (d. 1236)'.

²⁰⁰ Rollason, *Sources*, p. 32.

²⁰¹ D. N. Dumville, 'Textual Archaeology and Northumbrian History Subsequent to Bede', in *Coinage in Ninth-Century Northumbria: The Tenth Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History*, ed. by D. M. Metcalf (BAR British Series, 180; Oxford, 1987), pp. 43-55.

²⁰² Corner, 'Wendover, Roger of (d. 1236)'; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, p. 368.

²⁰³ Corner, 'Wendover, Roger of (d. 1236)'; Gransden, *Historical Writing*, pp. 359-368.

introduction to the sources; we now turn to the additions to our knowledge made by the works here discussed.

The Anglo-Norman sources: what's new?

The outline of Anglo-Saxon history has always been based upon the different versions of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. When modern scholars start their research with the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, they follow in the footsteps of some of the most famous Anglo-Norman historians. As seen in the previous section, several works of Anglo-Norman authors survive. Most of these authors include the history of Anglo-Saxon England, building upon the foundations of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. One can imagine how legendary stories, presumably circulating at the time these Anglo-Norman sources were written, could have made their way into these new histories. Such elements would give us important insights into how Anglo-Saxon England was remembered by the Anglo-Norman historians. The aim of this section is to see if these writers had anything to add to the narrative of the Chronicle, to reveal how they remembered the Viking kingdom of York, by a comparison of information from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle with those later sources.

As stated earlier, the reader can find a table of comparison in the appendix, in which the annals of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle are compared with similar passages in later sources.²⁰⁴ There is no need to recount every addition here; rather, I will focus on the conclusions which can be drawn from this comparison. Merely glancing at the table, one is struck by how similar the Anglo-Norman sources are to the narrative found in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. One may venture from this that little was lost throughout the ages. A more cautious conclusion is that the

²⁰⁴ See Appendix II, pp. 144-163.

sources used by the Anglo-Norman writers were similar to the ones modern scholars are familiar with. This does not mean that the sources available were the same, for historians of Norman times may have had access to sources, written or oral, now lost, which they chose not to incorporate in their works.

Another observation, based on the comparison of the annals, is that Symeon's *Libellus* contains little from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. A significant account from this work is not included in the table, namely Cuthbert's elevation of Guthfrith to the kingship of York.²⁰⁵ Guthfrith's ascension can be dated with caution to 880-885, based on when the monks of Durham settled at Chester-le-Street, any year between 880 and 885, on which the sources differ slightly.²⁰⁶ What is important to remark in relation to this source is that Symeon based his stories about the settlement of the monks and their relation with Guthfrith on the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*,²⁰⁷ without actually adding new information. Symeon simply remoulded the information from his source material in his greater history of the church of Durham. The reason so little of Symeon's *Libellus* contains information on Anglo-Scandinavian York is that Symeon was little concerned with York; rather, he was occupied with the origins of the Durham church, its rights and its lands.²⁰⁸

Several of the authors included in the table are said to have had access to the elusive Northern Annals, a now lost annalistic work from Northern England concerned with the eighth century. Symeon, the compilers of the different parts of *Historia regum*, Roger of Wendover, and Roger of Hoveden are suspected of having used these annals as a source for their history.²⁰⁹ If

²⁰⁵ See chapter four, pp. 74-75.

²⁰⁶ Rollason, *Libellus*, pp. lxxii-lxxiii.

²⁰⁷ This source will be introduced in the next chapter, see chapter four, pp. 67-69.

²⁰⁸ See above, pp. 45-46.

²⁰⁹ Rollason, *Sources*, pp. 17-18, 25-27, 29-30, 32; Rollason, *Libellus*, p. lxxi.

true, that might explain why certain northern events are unique to these chronicles, most notably the adventures of King Egbert and Archbishop Wulfhere in the first years of Jorvik, which is only told of in the *Historia regum* II, Symeon's *Libellus*, Roger of Hoveden's *Chronica*, and Roger of Wendover's *Flores historiarum*. The fact that the information about Archbishop Wulfhere, King Egbert, and his successor is shared by these sources, does indeed suggest that these authors had access to a source which is lost to us. It is hard to imagine that the information on Egbert and his successors Ricsige and Egbert was orally preserved for over two centuries before it was written down.²¹⁰

A letter of Symeon to a dean of York, named Hugh, also gives an interesting account of Wulfhere's activities during the siege of York, which is not found in the other sources. What seems to be the earliest copy of the letter contains information on the archbishops of York from the time of Paulinus (bishop at York from 625-633/634) until bishop Thurstan (1114-1140). The inclusion of Thurstan means Symeon must have written the letter between 1130 and 1132, for then the dean of York was a man named Hugh.²¹¹ In the letter, Symeon describes how Wulfhere fled from York, during the slaughter (*strages*) at York in 867, to Wharfedale.²¹² Whether there is any historical truth to Symeon's account is difficult to assess. More importantly, however, we encounter here a scrap of a tradition on one of the archbishops of York and of the conquest of the city by the Vikings, providing evidence of lost traditions.

Having drawn attention to the most important observations of my analysis of the use of

²¹⁰ It may seem a great coincidence that both predecessor and successor of Ricsige are called Egbert, which may give rise to speculation that the accounts may be confused here; however, it should be remembered that some of the Viking kings share the same name as well. There are two Olaf's (Olaf Guthfrithson (939-941) and Olaf (Cuaran) Sihtricson (941-943/944)) and two Halfdan's (the Halfdan of 867-877 and the one who found his death in 910) who have either reigned or were involved with the Viking kingdom.

²¹¹ Richard Sharpe, 'Symeon as Pamphleteer', in *Symeon of Durham. Historian of the North*, ed. by David Rollason (Stamford, 1998), pp. 218-219.

²¹² Symeon, *Letter on the Archbishops of York*, in *Symeonis Opera*, vol. 1, p. 225 ('Inter has strages remotius se agebat episcopus Wulferius apud Addingham, in occidentali parte Eboraci, in valle quæ vocatur Hwerverdale, super ripam fluminis Hwerf, inter Oteleiam et castellum de Scipetun.)

the contemporary sources by later Anglo-Norman authors, we now turn, as promised above, to two specific authors. William of Malmesbury reveals a slightly different viewpoint when compared to the contemporary sources, while Geffrei Gaimar seems to have recounted a tradition on the capture of York. Before we come to our conclusion, we will address these additions.

William of Malmesbury on Northumbria and Athelstan

William of Malmesbury must be addressed slightly fuller than the sources so far discussed, for William characterizes the Danes of Northumbria differently from most sources. Furthermore, his is the only source which contains an elaborate account of the reign of Athelstan, which may derive from a now lost source. I will first discuss his characterization of the Northumbrian Danes; then I will, briefly, discuss an episode about King Athelstan and Guthfrith.

William's portrayal of the Northumbrian Danes is striking, for they are not presented as independent of Wessex; rather, they are often described as rebellious. For example, when William recounts how King Alfred set a nobleman, Æthelred, over Mercia, William states that this nobleman exercised control over East Anglia and Northumbria, which are said to 'ha[ve] long been planning to desert the king (...)'.²¹³ When recounting Edward's accomplishment, William states of the Northumbrians that they 'had already grown into one nation with the Danes (...)';²¹⁴ the latter may suggest that from this point onward, till the conquest of the region by Edward, William viewed it as independent, especially since he refers, shortly after, to Sihtric as king of the Northumbrians.²¹⁵ Still, William's vocabulary concerning Northumbria is ambiguous,

²¹³ William of Malmesbury, *De gestis regum Anglorum libri quinque*, bk. 2, par. 121, in *William of Malmesbury, Gesta Regum Anglorum, The History of the English Kings, volume 1*, ed. and trans. by R. A. B. Mynors, completed by R. M. Thomson and M. Winterbottom (Oxford, 1998), pp. 186-187 ('...iam dudum discessionem a rege parturientes...').

²¹⁴ *Gesta regum*, bk. 2, par. 125, pp. 196-197 ('qui cum Danis iam in unam gentem coaluerant').

²¹⁵ *Gesta regum*, bk. 2, par. 126, pp. 198-199.

for, after the death of Sihtric, he tells how King Athelstan took up the governance of that 'province' (*prouintiam*).²¹⁶ Of course, he may have meant it as Northumbria becoming a province of the English kingdom, but what these examples amply show is that William's portrayal of Northumbria is far from non-partisan. Of course, he knew that Wessex would emerge victorious; it seems that this has influenced his account of these past events. William wrote with the knowledge of hindsight, which clearly shines through in his account.

Another episode of the *Gesta regum* is of interest to us, namely the account of Athelstan's reign, which contains elements otherwise unrecorded. It is not my intention to consider the whole episode of Athelstan's reign; rather, we will focus on William's story of Guthfrith's siege of York and the envoy to Athelstan sent by the Norwegian king. William narrates how, in 927, Guthfrith, after having been expelled by king Athelstan, tried to besiege the city of York. The siege was unsuccessful due to Guthfrith's failure to persuade the inhabitants of the city to join his side. William states that, after the siege, Athelstan razed the *castrum*, which the Danes had been using as fortification.²¹⁷ This passage is important because of the association of York with the military defence of the Vikings, as well as for the agency of the inhabitants of the city in choosing their lords.

The other episode on King Athelstan of interest to us, describes how the king of the Norwegians, Harald, sent a ship to Athelstan with envoys, named Helgrim and Osfrid. These two men were royally received in the city of York (*qui, [i.e. Helgrim and Osfrid] regaliter in urbe Eboraca suscepti*).²¹⁸ The event cannot be dated more precisely than to the reign of Athelstan (927-936).

²¹⁶ *Gesta regum*, bk. 2, par. 131, pp. 206-207.

²¹⁷ *Gesta regum*, bk. 2, par. 134, pp.212-215.

²¹⁸ *Gesta regum*, bk. 2, par. 135, pp. 216-217.

The reliability of these two accounts has traditionally been viewed as good, for historians have argued that William had access to a now lost source on Athelstan's reign. However, Michael Lapidge has questioned this assumption, proving that the supposedly contemporary poems which William includes in his account were composed at the end of the eleventh or the early twelfth century.²¹⁹ Historians have generally taken notice of Lapidge's argument, though they still assume William had access to a source on Athelstan.²²⁰ Given the fact that King Athelstan was buried at Malmesbury, it may also be supposed that the stories found their origins in an oral tradition.

What the passages above imply is that York was an important royal city. The first passage illustrates this by the apparent importance of the city for both Guthfrith and Athelstan. The second passage reveals the importance by noting that envoys were royally entertained in the city; if we can trust this account, this must mean that there was either a royal hall or a comparable structure which could offer such entertainment.²²¹ The last option is hardly surprising given the centrality of feasting in Anglo-Saxon society. The possible existence of a royal hall is more important, for that would indicate York was a royal city. However, one should be careful to base one's argument on William's account, for William wrote his account some two hundred years after the event. William may simply have supposed, as many modern historians do to this day, that York had been a royal city. Also, the receiving of envoys at York may have coincided with an assembly held by King Athelstan in that city, perhaps to govern his newly acquired province.

What we may conclude from the two passages, is that Athelstan was viewed as an important king by William, and that his involvement with York was remembered. The latter is

²¹⁹ Michael Lapidge, 'Some Latin poems as evidence for the reign of Athelstan', *Anglo-Saxon England* (1980) vol. 9, pp. 62-63, 65-66, 69, 71.

²²⁰ Including the most recent editors, Rodeny Thomson and M. Winterbottom, see: Thomson, *Gesta Regum*, pp. 116-117.

²²¹ Rollason, *Sources*, p. 167.

interesting, for in other sources Athelstan does not appear at York. William may have viewed Athelstan as responsible for the securing of that province by razing the *castrum* in the city as well as for undertaking diplomacy within York. Guthfrith's failed attempt to arouse the enthusiasm of the inhabitants of York may have functioned within William's account to enhance the power of Athelstan, for the inhabitants of the Viking city of York preferred a Wessex king to a Viking one. Furthermore, Athelstan was, after all, the first Wessex king to capture Northumbria. Taken together, the capture of York by Athelstan seems a major turning point in William's narrative of the reconquest of Northumbria by the Wessex royal dynasty.

Whether William had access to a lost source is of little importance to this chapter; what is far more interesting is the absence of any palpable traditions specifically concerned with the Viking kings of York in William's work, while we do encounter traditions on Anglo-Saxon kings. William was part Norman, but clearly he viewed the Anglo-Saxon past as an important part of the Anglo-Norman past. The fact that we do not encounter traditions on the Viking kings in his work is therefore not surprising, for including these would not have served William's agenda to present the Anglo-Saxon kings as worthy predecessors to the Norman kings.

The First French Chronicle: Geffrei Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engleis*

Before moving on to the general conclusion, there is one final episode from an Anglo-Norman source which is of great interest. While Geffrei Gaimar is the only author who clearly wrote for an aristocratic audience, the main events of Anglo-Saxon history recorded in his work are in concord with the contemporary sources. There is one notable exception, which is the capture of York of 866/867. Gaimar supplies us with an account both of why the Danes came to capture York and of how Ælla came to be killed. This section is concerned with that tradition. First, I will briefly summarize Gaimar's story before drawing conclusions from it.

Gaimar explains, after he has recounted the siege of York by the Danes, how these Danes came to be there in the first place. He tells that before the Danes arrived, there lived a man named Buern Bucecarle, who had been a close vassal to King Osberht. Buern was overseas when Osberht visited his home one day, where the king raped Buern's wife. When Buern learned this from his lamenting wife, whom he forgave, he publicly renounced the king. This example is followed by other vassals. Next, for sake of revenge, Buern is said to have invited the Danes to Northumbria.

After the Danes had come to Northumbria, captured York and killed King Osberht, Gaimar tells how king Ælla arrives at his home after a day of hunting. At his home he receives the news of the capture of York and the death of Osberht. Ælla intends to march on York, but is warned by a blind man, who predicts that Ælla's nephew, Orin, will be the first to be slain in that battle, and that king Ælla will find his grave there as well. As a consequence, Ælla locks up his nephew in a tower before marching towards the city. Gaimar tells, in an amusing bit of verse, how the nephew tries to fly from the window of the tower using two shields for wings. Miraculously, Orin survives the fall. He then marches towards York, joins the battle against the Danes, delivers the first kill on the part of the Northumbrians but is subsequently killed himself. After that Ælla is killed as well.²²²

Viewed from a purely empirical standpoint, this account seems to be nothing more than an elaboration of a major event in history, merely decoration to a story. There is no way of 'checking the facts', while the contents suggest it belongs to legend rather than history. No other source which has come down to us confirms these stories. However, as a testimony to once existing traditions, Gaimar is extremely important. The capture of York by the Vikings had

²²² This summary is based on Geffrei Gaimar, *L'Estoire des Engleis*, in *Geffrei Gaimar, Estoire des Engleis/History of the English*, ed. and trans. by Ian Short (Oxford, 2009), pp. 140-155, lines 2573-2831.

sparked another tradition, found in Scandinavian sources, as well. The battle of York in 867 must have been a traumatic event, it would be more surprising if no traditions had formed around it. Gaimar may have invented the account of his own accord; surely the concern with loyalty and lordship within the story must have been of interest to his audience, but given the naming of certain participants it seems more likely to me that it was a story which circulated at the time Gaimar composed his work.

Conclusion

An overview of how the Anglo-Norman historians used material from contemporary sources has revealed that they had little to add to the existing narrative concerning Viking age York and its kings and archbishops. It is unknown whether these historians had access to sources unavailable to us, because their accounts are so similar to the available contemporary evidence. As pointed out above, material may have disappeared because the Anglo-Norman historians left it unused.

A few of these authors, Symeon, Roger of Wendover, and Roger of Hoveden, seem to have had access to a northern version of the Chronicle. This can be concluded from their inclusion of details on the first few kings ruling, most likely in northern Northumbria, and some information on the archbishops, most notably Wulfhere. If the Northern Annals' provenance of the added information is accepted, these historians still built upon an existing account without adding details of their own.

The letter of Symeon to the dean of York, William's *Gesta regum*, and Geffrei Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engleis*, prove that traditions surrounding Viking age York did once exist. Even though this is little evidence, it seems clear that Viking age York was remembered at the time these authors wrote. Traditions on specific kings may already have started to fade from memory, but such a traumatic event as the capture of York was clearly remembered, as can be seen from

Symeon's letter and Gaimar's story of Buern. Though it is difficult to come to a clear understanding of how many traditions still circulated in Anglo-Norman times, Gaimar and Symeon show that some stories must still have been known to our Anglo-Norman historians. Therefore, most authors seem to have made the conscious choice not to incorporate legends on Jorvik.

The reason for not remembering Anglo-Scandinavian York must be sought in, again, the concept of social memory. The historians under consideration in this chapter were often not concerned with Anglo-Scandinavian York. Rather, they were concerned with, for example, or providing a historical narrative for a community (like Symeon did), or, like William, with providing a new ruling house with respectable predecessors. Gaimar is the exception because his audience is different, and even then he only includes a single story. The history of the Viking kingdom of York was simply not relevant for the present of these Anglo-Norman historians.

Chapter 4: Ruling from Jorvik - Kings versus Archbishops

In this chapter I will explore the contemporary evidence concerning York between 866 and 954 in order to consider what evidence there is for any ruling exercised from York. In the previous chapters, we have considered the later Scandinavian and Anglo-Norman traditions on Anglo-Scandinavian York in order to understand how it was remembered and why. Here, we are concerned with the second theme of this thesis: who were the rulers of Jorvik?

In order to come to a tentative answer, we will survey the contemporary evidence. We will start with a consideration of the narrative sources. These are the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the *Historia regum I*, the *Chronicon Æthelwardi*, and the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*. Before analysing these sources, we will first introduce them. After the survey of evidence from the narrative written sources, we will consider law making and the use of charters, both closely associated with kingship. After these, we will consider the most substantial evidence for power exercised, the numismatic evidence; who struck coins and what can be concluded from these coins? Lastly, we will consider whether there is evidence for either the Viking kings or the archbishops acting as patrons at any one point during the period. At the end of this chapter I will draw the evidence together and conclude what can be argued solely from the evidence considered, if only to stress the difficulties of the evidence.

Introduction to the sources

In this section, I will briefly introduce the (near)-contemporary sources important for this chapter: the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the *Historia regum I*, already introduced in the previous chapter, the *Historia de Cuthberto*, and the *Chronicon Æthelwardi*. I will address the main issues of these sources.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is a complicated source, for it is actually made up of several different chronicles, denoted A-F, which all derive from a single chronicle, called the common stock, which related events up to 892.²²³ The different chronicles are actually produced in different centres, thus preserving certain regional interests.²²⁴ The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle began, in the form of the common stock, as an official government-related document, mainly interested in secular affairs; it originated at the court of King Alfred in the ninth century. It is most famous for its concern with the wars between the Wessex royal house and the Viking lands.²²⁵ The Chronicle does pose some serious problems for the modern historians, for due to the circulation of several chronicles, owners of a copy, sometimes only in their possession for a limited time, could insert new information as they saw fit;²²⁶ this is one of the reason why most of the chronicles often show an interest in a specific region.

While all chronicles are of interest to the historian of Anglo-Saxon England, two are most relevant for the history of Northern England, namely the D and E versions, which together are called the northern recension. The F version also transmits the Northern Recension, but is based mostly on E, as well as containing material from the A chronicle.²²⁷ Here, I will introduce D and

²²³ Alice Jorgenson, 'Introduction: Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Language, Literature, History*, ed. by Alice Jorgenson (Turnhout, 2010), p. 4; G. P. Cubbin, *MS D*, p. xvii. The different versions are: A: Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 173, known as the 'Parker Chronicle', assigned to Winchester; B: London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A VI, assigned to Abingdon; C: London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B I, known as the 'Abingdon Chronicle', often assigned to Abingdon; D: London, British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius B IV, known as the 'Worcester Chronicle', associated with Worcester or York; E: Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Laud Misc. 636, known as the 'Peterborough Chronicle', associated with Peterborough; F: London, British Library, MS Cotton Domitian A VIII, known as the 'Domitian bilingual' associated with Chirst Church in Canterbury; G: London, British Library, MS Cotton Otho B XI, associated with Winchester, a copy of the A chronicle; H: London, British Library, MS Cotton Domition A IX, fol. 9.

²²⁴ Jorgenson, 'Introduction', pp. 4-8.

²²⁵ James Campbell, 'The Lost Centuries: 400-600', in *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. by James Campbell (London, 1982) pp. 26-27; Michael Lapidge *et al.* (ed.), *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia of Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1999), p. 35; Barbara Yorke, 'The Representation of Early West Saxon History in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle', in *Reading the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Language, Literature, History*, ed. by Alice Jorgenson (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 141-159.

²²⁶ Lapidge, *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia*, pp. 35-36.

²²⁷ Jorgenson, 'Introduction', p. 5.

E.

The core of D is a tenth century conflation, combining material from E and C, while also containing information not found elsewhere.²²⁸ For the period after 890, the D text combines information from the Chronicles A, B and C, with the contents of the E chronicle, preferring the latter but amending it at times with information from the other chronicles. It also uses other sources, such as the Mercian Register, a text containing information on the queen of Mercia, Æthelflæd, who fought against the Vikings together with King Edward.²²⁹ For the annals between 926 and 981, D, at times, shows parallels with more than four of the other chronicles; the information in all the chronicles becomes scarcer for these years.²³⁰

The E version seems to be a truer representation of the northern recension. The chronicle reveals strong connections to Peterborough, where it was kept in the Middle Ages. In fact, Susan Irvine has argued in her recent edition of the E chronicle that ‘the E-text, all the evidence would suggest, is a copy of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle made at Peterborough in about 1121.’²³¹ An earlier manuscript of the E version was used as a source by the D chronicle, while both D and E are also based on the same archetype.²³² The annals between 892-981 in E are relatively thin when compared to other versions of the chronicle. Due to this, Susan Irvine has argued, ‘the northern recension, represented by E, was comparatively neglected’ during this period; therefore E drew its information from the other chronicles.²³³ It is generally supposed that both chronicles,

²²⁸ Cubbin, *MS D*, pp. xvii-xxvii; Jorgenson, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

²²⁹ Cubbin, *MS D*, pp. xxvii-xxxii; Jorgenson, ‘Introduction’, pp. 14-15.

²³⁰ Cubbin, *MS D*, pp. xxxii-xxxvi.

²³¹ Susan Irvine, *MS. E, A semi-diplomatic edition with introduction and indices* (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, A Collaborative Edition, volume 7; Cambridge, 2004), p. xii.

²³² Cubbin, *MS D*, pp. xx-xxi; Jorgenson, ‘Introduction’, p. 5; Irvine, *MS E*, pp. xxxvi-xxxvii, lviii.

²³³ Irvine, *MS E*, pp. lviii-lxiv (p. lxiv).

D and E, contain contemporary information in the annals between 866-957.²³⁴ Leaving the textual difficulties of the Chronicle aside, it is important to note that here we will rely mainly on the northern recension as preserved in the version D and E, for it contains the most relevant information to our subject.

Because the *Historia regum* I has been introduced in the previous chapter,²³⁵ we will now consider the *Chronicon Æthelwardi*. This chronicle is a Latin rendering of the Anglo-Saxon chronicle, undertaken by an ealdorman of England, named Æthelweard, during the reign of Æthelred the Unready (c.966-1016).²³⁶ Æthelweard and his family were patrons to the famous Ælfric of Eynsham, this, according to Patrick Wormald, led to the creation of the translation of the chronicle in the first place.²³⁷ It is generally agreed that Æthelweard must have died shortly after 998, when he ceased signing charters in the position of ealdorman.²³⁸

Æthelweard's chronicle is divided into four books.²³⁹ The first three books narrate the history from the baptism of Christ in 30 A.D to the death of Æthelwulf in 855.²⁴⁰ These first three books are mainly derived from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, along with information taken from Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*. In the fourth book, relating events up to 973,²⁴¹ the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is followed from the accession of Æthelbald in 855 to a visit by an Irishman in 891 to

²³⁴ Up to 890 both are based on the Common Stock. For the annals from 890-954, see: Cubbin, *MS D*, pp. civ-cxvii; Irvine, *MS E*, pp. lviii-lxiv. In general the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is held to contain reliable information, see: Lapidge, *The Blackwell Encyclopaedia*, p. 36.

²³⁵ See chapter 3, pp. 42-44.

²³⁶ This identification is now generally accepted, see: A Campbell, *The Chronicle of Æthelweard* (London, 1962), pp. xiii-xv; Patrick Wormald, 'Æthelweard (d. 998?)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8918>, accessed 29 Dec 2012].

²³⁷ Wormald, 'Æthelweard (d. 998?)'.

²³⁸ Campbell, *The Chronicle*, xv; Wormald 'Æthelweard (d. 998?)'.

²³⁹ The work survived in a single English manuscript which was mostly lost in the Cottonian fire of 1731, though it had been printed by Henry Saville in 1596. Though Saville never revealed on which manuscript his transcript was based, it is supposedly: British Museum, Cotton Otho A x. See: Campbell, *The Chronicle*, pp. ix-x; Wormald, 'Æthelweard (d. 998?)'.

²⁴⁰ Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, bk 1-3, in *The Chronicle of Æthelweard*, ed. by A. Campbell (London, 1962), pp. 1-33.

²⁴¹ Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, bk 4, in *The Chronicle*, pp. 34-56.

Alfred; in the A version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle the first hand stops after the entry of this annal.²⁴² From this year onward, Æthelweard's narrative, which ends in 973 during the rule of King Edgar (959-975), is based on a version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which differs from all surviving copies, though it seems most closely related to the A version, and contains information otherwise unknown. This makes Æthelweard's chronicle an invaluable source for the history of England and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.²⁴³

The last contemporary written source to consider is the anonymous *Historia de Cuthberto*. The work is a saint's life which was produced within the community of St Cuthbert in either the late Anglo-Saxon or very early Norman period. It recounts stories and legends connected to St Cuthbert, as well as important events in the history of the community of the monks. It is the earliest known source containing the story of how the community of Cuthbert moved from Lindisfarne to Chester-le-Street during the Viking age. Further, it contains records of land-holding by the community, a feature which is not encountered in other pre-Conquest narrative works.²⁴⁴

We have already recounted, in the previous chapter, how productive the community of Cuthbert was in producing history-related works.²⁴⁵ The *Historia de Cuthberto*, was produced at Durham as well, though earlier than the *Libellus* or the *Historia regum*.²⁴⁶ The composition of the *Historia de Cuthberto* is dated to either the tenth century or the eleventh century, based on manuscript evidence. The text survives in several manuscripts in different forms. Most

²⁴² Dorothy Whitelock, David C. Douglas, and Susie I. Tucker (ed.), *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (London, 1961), p. 53, n. 8.

²⁴³ Campbell, *The Chronicle*, pp. xvii-xviii, xxiv, xxiv; Rollason, *Sources*, p. 20.

²⁴⁴ Ted Johnson South, *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 1.

²⁴⁵ See chapter 3, pp. 41-42.

²⁴⁶ There are important hints that the great productivity of the eleventh and twelfth century had a precedent: the community is famous for the production of the elaborate manuscript of the *Lindisfarne Gospels*, see: South, *Historia*, pp. 2-4.

notably, in one manuscript, called the C manuscript,²⁴⁷ the text ends with a visit to Chester-le-Street by king Edmund, while in the O manuscript²⁴⁸ the material ends in the reign of Cnut. The argument of dating centres on a question of composition, and the inherent structure of the text - i.e. what constitutes the core of the text and what are later traditions.²⁴⁹

The compiler of the *Historia de Cuthberto* had several sources available for his narrative. There were several *vitae* of Cuthbert in existence already, of which three were used by the composer of the *Historia de Cuthberto*. These were the anonymous *Vita sancti Cuthberti*, which was produced at Lindisfarne between 699 and 705; Bede's prose version of the *Vita sancti Cuthberti*; and, finally, information on the saint contained within Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*.²⁵⁰ Historical information on the period after 731 derives from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.²⁵¹ The *Historia de Cuthberto* is most interesting for information not found elsewhere, namely the miracle stories pertaining to Cuthbert, which are the election of the Viking king Guthfrith by the monks of the community; a story of a dream of King Alfred in which Cuthbert appeared;²⁵² the seven-years wandering of the community, including a miracle in which waves of blood prevent the monks from transporting the body of the saint to Ireland; the death of the Viking Onlafblad by the intercession of Cuthbert; and, finally, a miracle in which Guthfrith gains victory thanks to saint Cuthbert.²⁵³ These stories derive probably from a combination of written

²⁴⁷ Cambridge University Library (CUL) Ff. 1. 27.

²⁴⁸ Bodleian Library, Oxford, Bodley 596, folios 203r-206v.

²⁴⁹ South, *Historia*, pp. 25-36.

²⁵⁰ South, *Historia*, p. 4; Ted Johnson South, 'Changing Images of Sainthood: St. Cuthbert in the *Historia de Cuthberto*', in *Saints, Studies in Hagiography*, ed. by Sandro Sticca (New York, 1996), p. 82.

²⁵¹ South, *Historia*, p. 5.

²⁵² Cf.: Luisella Simpson, 'The King Alfred/St Cuthbert Episode in the *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*: Its Significance for mid-tenth century English History', in *St Cuthbert, his Cult and his Community to AD 1200*, ed. by Gerald Bonner, David Rollason, and Clare Stancliffe (Suffolk, 1989), pp. 397-411.

²⁵³ *Historia de Sancto Cuthberto*, ed. and trans. by Ted Johnson South (Cambridge, 2002), chs. 13, 15-18, 20, 23, 33, pp. 52-63, 68-71. For a short overview of the miracles, see: South, 'Changing Images', pp. 86-89.

sources and oral traditions circulating within the community.²⁵⁴

The *Historia de Cuthberto* was, probably, a compilation of records of the community placed within a larger narrative lending a historical context to claims made in the text. The *Historia de Cuthberto* was compiled in order to assert and record certain claims of the community of St Cuthbert. Grants of land and rights given to the community were originally written down in ‘treasure-books’, alongside other material, instead of being recorded in charters.²⁵⁵ The purpose of the *Historia de Cuthberto* seems to have been not simply providing the saint with a hagiographical account, but, rather, to provide the community of St Cuthbert with a collection of assertions to their rights and lands, backed up with the power of the saint.²⁵⁶ With a basic understanding of these sources, we can now turn to what these reveal.

Contemporary narrative sources: who, what, where?

The contemporary records from Anglo-Saxon England are rich with details about the undertakings of the Vikings; however, this was all written down on behalf of the Wessex kings. Therefore, the sources maintained a keen interest in the battle against the Vikings and the expansion of Wessex into the Viking territories. The chronicles are far less concerned with the internal affairs of the Viking kingdoms. One needs to rely on a few details, scattered far and wide, within these sources to come to an understanding of these Viking kingdoms.

In this section, we will focus on the small scraps of evidence from the narrative sources pertaining to the activities of the Viking kings and the archbishops of York. First, we will look at the different events which took place at York. Next, we will consider passages revealing

²⁵⁴ South, *Historia*, p. 5.

²⁵⁵ South, *Historia*, p. 6.

²⁵⁶ South, *Historia*, p. 7; South, ‘Changing Images’, pp. 92-94.

diplomacy conducted by either the kings, the archbishops, or the aristocracy. Finally, we will see if the sources mention whether the kings of York had any military resources and whether these were from York or its hinterland.

One of the most famous events in York's history, already partly discussed in the previous chapters, is the capture of the city by the Vikings in 866. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle narrates how the great *here*, the invader army of the Danish, arrived in Britain and wintered in East Anglia; the people of that province made peace with the army, according to the same source.²⁵⁷ The next annal tells how the *here*, in 867, went to Northumbria and to the city of York. In Northumbria, two kings, Ælla and Osberht, were in dispute with each other over the kingship of Northumbria.²⁵⁸ After York had fallen to the Vikings, the kings decided to unite. Then the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells how 'they [i.e. Ælla and Osbert] collected a large army and attacked the enemy in York, and broke into the city; and some of them got inside, and an immense slaughter was made of the Northumbrians, some inside and some outside, and both kings were killed, and the survivors made peace with the enemy.'²⁵⁹ From this account of the events of 867, it appears that the *here* had already conquered York, which is likely given the fact that the Chronicle placed the start of a year in the autumn of 866.²⁶⁰ In 867, the great battle of York took place between the Viking *here* and the combined forces of Osberht and Ælla - though no indication of how large any force was is given by the sources. After the fall of York, the contemporary sources state that the Northumbrians made a peace with the Danes.²⁶¹ As seen in the previous chapter, the account of the chronicle is strikingly similar to those of the Anglo-Norman chronicles, except for some

²⁵⁷ ASC 866, in *MS D*, p. 24.

²⁵⁸ See chapter 1, pp. 3-5.

²⁵⁹ ASC, 867 in *MS D*, p. 24; translation from: Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 45. See Appendix II for Old English text, pp. 143-166.

²⁶⁰ Rollason, *Sources*, p. 71.

²⁶¹ ASC, 867, in *MS D*, p. 24; *HR I*, annal 867, in Symeonis Opera, vol. 2, pp. 74-75.

information on the puppet-king Egbert and the archbishop Wulfhere preserved in later sources.²⁶²

One of the first documented events after 866 is the arrival of an ealdorman from Wessex. Æthelweard tells in his chronicle how ealdorman Æthelnoth went from Wessex and contacted the enemy in the city of York; it is said that the enemy had possession of large territories in Mercia.²⁶³ No information is given on what was discussed there. David Rollason has raised the possibility that the information in Æthelweard's work may correspond to an event described in the *Historia regum* I under the year 893, which describes how the East Saxons and the Northumbrians gave hostages and swore fealty to King Alfred against the Vikings.²⁶⁴ It is a tempting observation, though it lacks evidence to support it. What the account does suggest is that the place to contact the enemy was York. The claim that the enemy owned much land in Mercia may suggest that the distinction historians draw between the Danelaw and the Viking kingdom of York may not have been recognized as such by contemporaries, or later chroniclers.

Another interesting event is recorded in a non-Insular, but near-contemporary,²⁶⁵ source, namely in the *Historia* of Richer of Rheims. Richer recounts how, in 936, duke Hugh of Francia sought to restore the royal line of Carolingians. The legitimate heir was Louis, who was living in Britain at the time, a nephew of king Athelstan - then reigning over Northumbria. Duke Hugh sent an envoy to king Athelstan who 'was with his nephew in the city of York, attending to the business of the realm with his men.'²⁶⁶ This seems to be based on the *Annals of Flodoard*, which

²⁶² See chapter 3, pp. 54-55.

²⁶³ Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, bk. 2, p. 51 ('Adit in hostes Euoraca urbe, qui non parua territoria pandunt in Myrciorum regno...').

²⁶⁴ *HR* I, annal 893, p. 92.

²⁶⁵ Richer of Reim's work was written between 991 and 998; he uses the contemporary *Annals of Flodoard* for his narrative up to c. 965. Both sources were closely connected in place and time to the events they describe. See: Justin Lake (ed.), *Richer of Saint-Rémi, Histories Volume 1* (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 10; Cambridge, 2011) pp. vii, xvii.

²⁶⁶ Richer of Saint-Rémi, *Histories*, book 2, chapter 2, in *Richer of Saint-Rémi, Histories Volume 1* (Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library 10; Cambridge, 2011), pp. 162-163 ('Adelstanus rex in urbe quae dicitur Eurvich regnorum negotia cum nepote Ludovico apud suos disponebat.')

recount this event as well, omitting the mention of York, dating it to 936.²⁶⁷ Richer based much of his early account on Flodoard's annals; Justin Lake claims: 'Indeed, much of the first half of his [i.e. Richer] history (...) is a rewriting of the *Annals* in one way or another.'²⁶⁸ However, the extra information which the *Historia* of Richer contains, concerning the visit to York, might still be reliable, for Richer's father had been in service of Louis IV - the Louis who was at York with king Athelstan.²⁶⁹

Obviously, this is a very interesting story, for it places a king at York managing his kingdom together with his 'men'. In the previous chapter we have encountered a similar account by William in which Athelstan entertained envoys from Norway in York.²⁷⁰ It is tempting to assume that such a council was held at York in order to govern the newly-acquired province of Athelstan. The account from the *Historia* enjoys greater authority, but it supports the idea of York being a royal centre at the time. However, I think it more likely that both accounts refer to a council meeting, which may not necessarily always have been held at York, especially since both refer to Athelstan, who had no reason to permanently reside in York.

Sadly, these are all the events which can be gleaned, from the narrative sources, to have taken place at York. Now it is time to consider diplomatic activities of the Viking kings. These must be based on the narrative written sources, for no other evidence has survived. The sources mention treaties made between Viking kings and others. We will first recount the diplomatic activities of the kings, then these of the archbishops and finally of the nobility, whoever these were, of Northumbria.

The first piece of evidence for diplomacy concerns King Edward of Wessex. In 906

²⁶⁷ *Annals of Flodoard*, annal 936 in *Les Annales de Flodoard*, ed. by P. Lauer (Paris 1906) pp. 200-201; Rollason, *Sources*, p. 73.

²⁶⁸ Lake, *Richer of Saint-Rémi*, p. xvii.

²⁶⁹ Lake, *Richer of Saint-Rémi*, pp. xv, xix; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 344, n. 5.

²⁷⁰ See chapter 3, pp. 57-58.

Edward made peace with the East Angles and the Northumbrians out of necessity, according to the *Historia regum* I and the E version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle.²⁷¹ None of the sources state that it was a Viking king who was involved in this peace-making, though it is likely that this would have been the case; otherwise one would expect more detail on the part of the agent. In 910 the Northumbrians broke the peace, according to the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. After many years of campaigning, Edward made peace again with the different kingdoms of the north. The A version of the Chronicle, containing unique information on Edward's campaign, states for 923: 'And then the king of the Scots and all the people of the Scots, and Rægnald, and the sons of Eadwulf and all who live in Northumbria, both English and Danish, Norsemen and others, and also the king of the Strathclyde Welsh and all the Strathclyde Welsh, chose him as father and lord.'²⁷² It is tempting to read this entry as Edward claiming overlordship over these kingdoms.²⁷³ More importantly, what it clearly shows is diplomacy being conducted by the Viking kings.

Another clear indication of diplomacy is conducted by King Athelstan, Edward's successor. Athelstan seems to have enjoyed good relations with King Sihtric Caoch Sihtricson of the Northumbrians (920-927), for in 926 Athelstan gave his sister in marriage to this king.²⁷⁴ The marriage may very well have been intended to bring the house of Wessex and the Danes of Northumbria closer together politically. However, king Sihtric died the next year. Still, the marriage may have helped Athelstan when he took over as king of Northumbria in that year.²⁷⁵ The marriage arrangement between King Athelstan of Wessex and King Sihtric of York is the

²⁷¹ *ASC* E, annal 906, p. 54; *HR* I, annal 906, p. 92.

²⁷² Date is 920. *ASC* A, annal 923, in *MS A. A semi-diplomatic edition with introduction and indices*, ed. by Janet M. Bately (The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle: A Collaborative Edition, volume 3; Cambridge, 1986), p. 69 ('(...) hine geceas þa to fæader 7 to hlaforde Scotta cyning 7 eall Scotta þeod, 7 Rægnald 7 Eadulfes suna 7 ealle þa þe on Norþhymbrum bugeaþ, ægþer ge Englisce ge Denisce ge Norþmen ge oþre, 7 eac Stræclædweala cyning 7 ealla Stræclædwealas.').

²⁷³ The concept of overlordship is more fully addressed in chapter 5, see p. 111.

²⁷⁴ *ASC* 925, p.41.

²⁷⁵ *ASC* 925, 926, p. 41.

best evidence for diplomacy between these two kingdoms found in the sources.

Another recorded instance of diplomacy where a Wessex king met a Danish king, was in 943; in fact, the Wessex king in question, Edmund, met two Danish kings. In that year he stood sponsor to, first, king Olaf Cuaran Sihtricson, and, ‘after a fairly big interval’, to king Rægnald Guthfrithson.²⁷⁶ Something must have angered Edmund, for the next year he drove out both kings and took control of Northumbria.²⁷⁷ The baptisms may be interpreted as diplomatic exchanges or as a recognition on the part of the Viking kings of King Edmund’s superiority.

One last possible example of diplomacy is that between a community of monks and one of the Viking kings, found in the *Historia de Cuthberto*. This source relates how, after the death of Halfdan, St Cuthbert instructed the abbot of Carlisle, Eadred, to go to the Danes and buy a slave boy named Guthfrith. Next, he should order the crowd to elevate this boy to the kingship of Northumbria. Cuthbert goes on to explain that Eadred should tell this new king to grant all the land between the Tyne and the Wear to Cuthbert.²⁷⁸ The interventions by St Cuthbert on behalf of the monks clearly belong to the realm of hagiography, while we have already drawn attention to the tendency of the *Historia de Cuthberto* to record and protect their claims to land. However, how should we understand the story of Guthfrith being made king through the machinations of the abbot? The *Historia regum* I also contains a reference to this story, noting in the annal for 883 that Guthfrith, identified as slave, was made king, linking this to the restoration of the community at Chester-le-Street.²⁷⁹ To consider whether this can be interpreted as evidence of diplomacy, the question that needs to be addressed here is whether the account of Guthfrith’s ascension belongs to the realm of invented traditions or whether there is a grain of truth to it.

²⁷⁶ *ASC*, 943, pp. 43-44.

²⁷⁷ *ASC*, 944, p. 44; *HR* I, annal 945, p.94.

²⁷⁸ *Historia de Cuthberto*, ch. 13, pp. 52-53.

²⁷⁹ *HR* I, entry 883, p. 86.

Of Guthfrith little else is known besides the story recounted above, which Symeon reused in his *Libellus*, except for a miracle story in which Guthfrith is granted victory over the Scots by St Cuthbert.²⁸⁰ Æthelweard mentions Guthfrith's death and his burial in the Minster of York, referring to him as a 'hateful king'.²⁸¹ This statement is very interesting. First of all, the adjective 'hateful' seems to contrast with the patronage of the community of St Cuthbert, for surely such a king would hardly be hateful? Secondly, the fact that Guthfrith was buried at York Minster makes it almost without doubt that he was Christian, making the adjective stranger still. The truth is that we don't know why he would be a hateful king; it may have been used by Æthelweard to contrast him to king Alfred, for Guthfrith is called hateful in a passage preceding the description of Alfred's death. A single coin is ascribed to Guthfrith which bears a small cross, which might be used to support the conclusion that Guthfrith was indeed Christian.²⁸² If he was Christian, cooperation between the community of St Cuthbert and Guthfrith may seem more likely.

To sum up, Guthfrith may have enjoyed links with the community of St Cuthbert at Chester-le-Street. He may have granted lands to the community; he may have given gifts. The keyword here is *may*, for there is no evidence other than these stories to support this. What we can argue from the fact that a link between Guthfrith and the community of Cuthbert was documented quite early, even if it was in a partisan source, is that it indicates a relationship between the king and the community, though it was probably less miraculous than as it is portrayed in our sources.

Those are the few references to the possibility of diplomacy conducted by the Viking kings found in the contemporary sources. Even less evidence survives of the involvement of the

²⁸⁰ *Historia de Cuthberto*, ch. 33, pp. 68-71.

²⁸¹ Æthelweard, *Chronicon*, bk. 4, p. 51: 'Transeunte etiam anni unius decursu obiit et Guthrid, rex Northymbriorum, in natalitiasancti Bartholomfi apostoli Christi; cuius musoleatur Euoraca corpus in urbe in basilica summa.' In the next sentence, Æthelweard calls Guthfrith 'foetidus rex', literally 'stinking king'.

²⁸² North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp.109-110, plate 7, no. 30.

archbishops in the world of diplomatic intrigue. In fact, only Wulfstan seems to have tried his hand at this risky business, which would ultimately end with his imprisonment. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle identifies Wulfstan specifically, in addition to the councillors of Northumbria, in accepting Eadred of Wessex as their king.²⁸³ As summarized in the introduction, the following years witnessed the expulsion and acceptance of several kings in the final years of the Viking kingdom of York. King Eadred was replaced by Eric Bloodaxe, and, later, Olaf Sihtricson.²⁸⁴ The different kings are said to have been expelled or accepted by the people of Northumbria.²⁸⁵ It seems reasonable, in the light of Wulfstan's involvement in the acceptance of king Edmund, to suppose that he was part of the group of councillors, especially given that Edmund imprisoned Wulfstan in 952.²⁸⁶ According to Smyth, the imprisonment was to prevent him from meddling in Northumbrian affairs.²⁸⁷ Whatever the reason, we have a clear picture of an archbishop meddling in political affairs in these annals.

The question here is whether Wulfstan's activities in diplomatic affairs are to be taken as representative of the other archbishops' involvement. Surely, archbishops could play an important part in politics, as the namesake of Wulfstan, Wulfstan II (d. 1023), was to do in the affairs of Æthelred the Unready and Cnut the Great, fifty years later.²⁸⁸ However, there is no indication that the archbishops preceding Wulfstan undertook any diplomatic action, apart from Wulfhere, who possibly sought alliances with the Danes in the years surrounding the capture of

²⁸³ *ASC*, 947, p. 44.

²⁸⁴ See chapter 1, pp. 3-5.

²⁸⁵ See for example annal 952 where the Northumbrians (*Norðhymbre*) are said to have driven out King Olaf: *ASC E* 952, p. 55.

²⁸⁶ *ASC*, 952, pp. 44-45.

²⁸⁷ Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 2, pp. 156-157.

²⁸⁸ See: M. Townend (ed.), *Wulfstan, Archbishop of York. The Proceedings of the Second Alcuin Conference* (Studies in the Early Middle Ages 10; Turnhout, 2004).

York;²⁸⁹ though in the case of Wulfhere, his activities are not mentioned in contemporary sources. Therefore, there is little evidence of archbishops conducting diplomacy, but there are hints that they, at times, were involved in the politics of their time.

Having considered the kings and archbishops, we will now look at the role of the aristocracy in the diplomacy of Northumbria during the Viking age.²⁹⁰ There have been hints of their involvement already, for Wulfstan chose and expelled kings together with the ‘councillors’ or the ‘inhabitants’ of Northumbria.²⁹¹ In 893, the sources state that the Northumbrians swore fealty to king Alfred.²⁹² Similarly, in 941 the Northumbrians are said to have been false to their submission made to King Edmund and chose a new king, namely the Viking Olaf Cuaran.²⁹³ This makes it likely that the aristocracy ‘made’ this king. In 952 the Northumbrians drove out King Olaf and chose to have Eric Bloodaxe return to the throne.²⁹⁴ Lastly, in 954, it is said that the Northumbrians drove out Eric Bloodaxe;²⁹⁵ archbishop Wulfstan could not have had anything to do with either of these events for he was tucked away in a prison from 952.²⁹⁶

From these few instances it is difficult to arrive at a clear conclusion. However, combined with the instances when archbishop Wulfstan meddled, it seems that the Northumbrians may have had a relatively large say in who ruled them. They would not lie down and just accept any king that came their way; if a king did not suit them, they were willing to undertake action. It must be stressed not to ascribe too much coherence to the agenda of the inhabitants, for it is more

²⁸⁹ See chapter 3, pp. 54-55.

²⁹⁰ The word ‘aristocracy’ is used here in want of a better term; the sources are ambiguous about it, but it seems reasonable to suppose that when the people of Northumbria are said to have chosen a king or sworn fealty to a new one, this would have been carried out by the leading nobles in the land - which is here denoted as aristocracy.

²⁹¹ ‘*witan*’ in: *ASC* 947, 948, p. 44. The *HR* I notes that the *indigenæ* took the decision of accepting Eadred again in 950, see: *HR* I, annal 950, p. 94.

²⁹² *ASC* 894, p. 33; *HR* I, 893, p. 92.

²⁹³ *ASC*, 941, p. 43.

²⁹⁴ *ASC* E, 952, p. 55: ‘*Norðhymbre*’.

²⁹⁵ *ASC*, 954, p. 45: ‘*Norðhymbre*’.

²⁹⁶ *ASC* D, 952, p. 45.

likely that they acted upon opportunity than on agenda. What may be concluded from this overview is that the political stage was not limited to the kings; surely, it must be clear that a king ruled with the consent of his bishops and nobles. The latter observations will tie in with the possible solution to the question of who ruled York, to which we will return later in chapter six.

The final question that needs to be explored in relation with the contemporary chroniclers, is whether the Viking kings of York had access to any military power at the city. Armies were no stranger to York for in 869 the *here* is said to have stayed in York for a year.²⁹⁷ However, there is never a mention of recruitment from the city, nor is there mention of an army stationed in the city again during the period under consideration. This does not mean that the city was never used as a garrison; rather it means simply that we lack the evidence to support such a claim.

Even through there is no evidence for recruiting from York, there is some evidence that forces were available for recruitment from Northumbria - though all the evidence derives from the events narrated by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 893. In that year, the Danes had been false to their oaths given to Alfred and a series of skirmishes followed. There is no need to summarize these, it is enough to note that on three different occasions it is said that the *here* is reinforced by forces from Northumbria and East Anglia.²⁹⁸ What kind of reinforcement these were, remains unclear. It may have been people working the land turning to weapons to help their lords in need, or it may have been Danish armies stationed in these territories. The fact that the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is at this point concerned with the moving *here*, not with the Scandinavian settlers, suggests that the Northumbrians were not fighting for their kingdom or their king. This makes it most likely that the reinforcements consisted of Danes, either living or stationed in Northumbria and East Anglia; it seems too soon for native Northumbrians to pick up their

²⁹⁷ *ASC* 869, p. 24; *HR* II, 869, p. 107.

²⁹⁸ *ASC* 894, pp. 31-33.

weapons and fight for their kings, who were not yet actively minting coins or doing anything besides fighting.

There is one reference to military action which started at York. The *Historia regum I* recounts how in 941, after king Olaf Guthfrithson had been killed, men of York attacked Lindisfarne and killed many.²⁹⁹ This should not be taken as evidence of the military capabilities of the city, for Lindisfarne is a small island where not many people could have lived. It does again show, however, the incentive on part of the populace of Northumbria, also witnessed above in relation to inviting, or expelling, kings.

As is often the case, conclusions based on the narrative sources are difficult, for there is much ambiguity. On the one hand, we have the impression of York being an important regnal centre which was worth besieging and conquering in 866 and 867; on the other hand we find very little actual activity emanating from the city. In the contemporary sources, only Archbishop Wulfstan is revealed as an important political figure, but before him there is little or no information recorded on the archbishops. The Viking kings seem to have been mainly occupied with fighting or being absent from the sources. All this, however, is, probably, more due to our sources than to the kings or archbishops. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was mostly interested in the north when it was fighting Wessex; in a sense, casting the Vikings in the role of the 'Other'.³⁰⁰ It did not record the internal business of that realm and we should not expect to find such information in these sources. Sadly, however, there are no written sources from Jorvik itself; this is one of the reasons why there is so much ambiguity about York in this period.

²⁹⁹ *HR I*, 941, p. 94.

³⁰⁰ Marcus Bull, *Thinking Medieval. An Introduction to the Study of the Middle Ages* (New York, 2005), p. 37.

Law Making

From Anglo-Saxon England several law-codes survive. These, along with some mentions in other sources such as Bede,³⁰¹ indicate that law-making was a prerogative of kings and was done regularly from King Alfred onwards.³⁰² After a short general introduction on some characteristics of English law making, this section will explore whether there are indications of law making by the Viking kings of York.

Law-codes did not stand the test of time in their original forms. Patrick Wormald has provided a brilliant analysis of English pre-twelfth-century law-making in his *The making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth Century*, focussing on the textual aspects of the surviving law-codes. It is likely that, after being issued, these codes were circulated on single-sheets of parchment, which means that they could easily be discarded after their use had expired. Furthermore, they could easily be reused in manuscript collections with other material, which would not necessarily pertain to legal matters. They could be reused with ideological purposes in mind, such as remoulding them into homilies, especially laws from authoritative kings, such as Alfred. As Patrick Wormald so eloquently put it: '[Anglo-Saxon] kings may have made law (...). However, the odds were stacked against the survival of their efforts. Monkish piety, alien ignorance and neglect, the hazards of damp, fire or bookworm conspired to distort or blot out what they and their servants did in pursuit of the goals to which they undoubtedly aspired.'³⁰³

This general introduction serves to remind us of the chances of survival of law-codes. The question that now needs to be explored is whether any law-making occurred in Viking age York.

³⁰¹ Bede described for instance the law of King Æthelberht of Kent in his *Historia Ecclesiastica*, see: Bede, *Historia Ecclesiastica*, book ii, chapter 5, in *Bede's Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, ed. and trans. by B. Colgrave and R. A. B. Mynors (Oxford, 1969), pp. 150-151.

³⁰² Patrick Wormald, *The Making of English Law: King Alfred to the Twelfth century* (Volume 1: Legislation and its Limits; Oxford, 1999), pp.111, 118-119.

³⁰³ Wormald, *The making of English Law*, pp. 181-209, 224-253, 263, 331-336, 478-479 (p. 479).

The answer to this question, based on the evidence, is, rather bluntly, no. No law-codes survive from the Viking kingdom of York. The only Viking king who had dealings with legislation was Guthrum, who was king of East Anglia rather than York. A treaty was drawn up, preserved in the Laws of king Alfred, between him and Alfred concerning the territory of Guthrum and the interactions between Anglians and Danes.³⁰⁴ Aside from that treaty, no tangible evidence survives of law-making by the Vikings.

Like the kings, none of the archbishops, except one, were involved with law-making. Wulfstan was named present at an assembly where the laws of Edmund, contained in his first law code, were established.³⁰⁵ This would have been, presumably, in the time of Edmund's rulership over Northumbria (945-946). Given the fact that Wulfstan is named alongside archbishop Oda of Canterbury and many other bishops, the code seems to invoke their consent rather than anything else.

This conclusion of no law-making, based on the written sources which have survived, needs some nuancing, for there are indirect indications of law-making. For instance, some of the Anglo-Saxon law codes reveal a Scandinavian influence in their vocabulary. The very Anglo-Saxon word for law, *lagu*, is derived from the Scandinavian languages, though these codes date to the end of the tenth and beginning of eleventh centuries, when it might be expected that enough time had passed for the Scandinavian languages to influence Old English vocabulary.³⁰⁶ Furthermore, there are a few references to Danish 'customs' or laws.³⁰⁷ Also, certain decrees

³⁰⁴ *Alfred's Treaty with Guthrum*, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. and trans. by F. Liebermann (Volume 1: Text und Übersetzung; Halle, 1903) pp. 125-128; Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 285-286.

³⁰⁵ *I Eadmund*, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, ed. and trans. by F. Liebermann (Volume 1: Text and Übersetzung; Halle, 1903) p. 184; Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, p. 310.

³⁰⁶ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 319, 322, 327-329, 372, 385, 386, 393.

³⁰⁷ For Danish customs in the law code *Æthelred III*, see: Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 320-330.

might have originated in Danish lands, most likely the Danelaw in that case.³⁰⁸ These are indications that the surviving law-codes are just a small fraction of the whole picture. Therefore, while we may, based solely on the surviving tangible evidence, argue that the Vikings kings did not make law, there are signs that these kings did legislate. Given the fact that law could also be made orally, for example in law courts, and given the, admittedly very few, references to Danish customs, we may suppose that within the Danelaw law was made.³⁰⁹

Charters

One of the rights of kings in Anglo-Saxon times was the granting of land to persons or, more often, churches; this was all part of the tradition of gift-giving, so important in the early Middle Ages.³¹⁰ From Anglo-Saxon England two major types of land are known, called *bookland* and *laenland*. *Laenland* was given for one lifetime to be returned to the king on the death of its possessor, while *bookland* was given in perpetuity. Such grants were often documented in charters which were signed by a group of people associated with the person doing the granting.³¹¹ The king might issue a charter, or stand witness as the king of the realm. The purpose of this section is to see if charters survive from York and, if so, who issued them.

Sadly, no charters have survived which were either issued or signed by the Viking kings of York. However, Hugh the Chanter tells us, in his *The History of the Church of York*, that the

³⁰⁸ In Edgar's *Wihthordestan* he stated the following: '(...) I will that secular rights should be in force among the Danes according to such good laws as they best prefer (...)' (trans. from Wormald, p. 126) (*7 ic wille, pæt woruldgeriht mid Denum standan be swa godum lagum, swa hy beste geceosan mægen*); see: *Æt Wihthordestane*, in *Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen*, pp. 210-211; Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 126, 317-320.

³⁰⁹ Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 482-483.

³¹⁰ Julia M. Smith, *Europe After Rome, A new Cultural History 500-1000* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 183-214.

³¹¹ Richard P. Abels, *Lordship and Military Obligation in Anglo-Saxon England* (London, 1988), pp. 43-56; John Blair, *The Church in Anglo-Saxon Society* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 87, 89-90, 104; James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London & New York, 2000), pp. 236-237; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 306-307; Ann Williams, *Kingship and Government in Pre-Conquest England c. 500-1066* (London, 1999), p. 61.

charters of the York Minster had been destroyed when the Normans harried the north in the years of 1069-1070.³¹² Therefore, if Hugh's statements it to be trusted, and there is no obvious reason not to,³¹³ there may exist a considerable gap in our knowledge, preventing us from adequately reviewing the evidence.³¹⁴

The only kings who enjoyed authority over York and are testified in charters, were the Wessex kings, Athelstan, Edmund, and Eadred.³¹⁵ This is not surprising, for from Wessex many charters survive. The charters do not testify to any grants to the city of York by these kings, except for one. This charter records a grant made by king Athelstan to the church of St Peter. The gift was composed of the land at Amounderness, Lancashire. In the charter this is dated to 930, but, based on internal evidence, the gift cannot have taken place before 934; therefore, doubts have been raised on the authenticity of the charter, though it is now generally accepted that it has a genuine basis.³¹⁶ Other charters of these Wessex kings were sometimes signed by the archbishop of York at the time the charter was drawn up, suggesting that the archbishops became, to some extent, part of the king's administration.³¹⁷

Thus, based on the surviving evidence, the archbishops were somewhat more active in

³¹² Hugh the Chanter, *The History of the Church of York 1066-1127*, in *Hugh the chanter, The History of the Church of York 1066-1127*, ed. by C. Johnson *et al.* (2nd edition; Oxford 1990), pp. 1-2: 'Incensa quoque et Beati Petri metropolis ecclesia, et ornamenta illius, care et priuilegia combusta uel perdita fuerunt.'

³¹³ Hugh's work does have a clear agenda, namely a claim to the primacy of the archbishop of York over Canterbury; however, the claim that all previous charters were lost during the ravaging of 1069-1070 does not seem to play a role in that dispute. See: Johnson, *Hugh the chanter*, pp.xxx-xlv.

³¹⁴ Some charters may have survived in other books, such as the York Gospel which entries show that certain lands at Harley were in York's hand at the time of composition; see: Wormald, *The Making of English Law*, pp. 187, 195-197.

³¹⁵ For Athelstan see: Peter. H. Sawyer, *Anglo-Saxon Charters: an Annotated List and Bibliography* (Royal Historical Society, Guides and Handbooks 8; London, 1968), s. 386-458; for Edmund see: s. 459-515, 947-948; for Eadred see: s. 516-538, 540- 580.

³¹⁶ s. 407. On the authenticity see: C. Hart, *The Early Charters of Northern England and the North Midlands* (Leicester, 1975) no. 119; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, p. 548.

³¹⁷ For a charter of Athelstan signed by Hrothweard, see: s. 403; for charters of the same king signed by Wulfstan, see: s. 409, 410, 413, 418, 419, 422, 423, 425, 434-436; for charters of Edmund signed by Wulfstan, see: s. 480, 494, 497, 505, 514; for charters of Eadred signed by Wulfstan, see: s. 516, 525, 526, 528, 529, 535, 542, 544-546, 549, 552, 558, 560, 564, 578.

the charter-business than the Viking kings: they issued none, but they did witness charters. The first archbishop who appears in a charter is Æthelbald. This concerns a charter in which king Alfred granted land to the bishop of Rochester, dated to 895. However, this charter is a forgery; if only for the impossibility of Æthelbald signing a charter as archbishop for Alfred in 895, since he became archbishop in 900.³¹⁸ Therefore, there is no evidence of any genuine charters signed by Æthelbald.

More has survived of Hrothweard, who signed charters between 16 April 928 until 29 April 930. It is interesting to note that these charters appear shortly after a Wessex king gained authority over York - indeed, all charters signed by Hrothweard are associated with King Athelstan.³¹⁹ There is even a surviving charter in which Hrothweard signed in the position of bishop, *after* he had become archbishop; though the charter in question was probably composed later than it was originally issued (it has been dated to 926-928).³²⁰

Hrothweard's successor, Wulfstan I, witnessed his first charter on 20 June 931,³²¹ he would continue to stand witness to charters until the end of his career, when he witnessed a charter in the position of bishop, because he had been made bishop of Dorchester.³²² All the

³¹⁸ s. 349. Scholars agree that this is a forgery, see: M. Brett, 'Forgery at Rochester', in *Fälschungen im Mittelalter* (Hannover, 1988) pp. 405-408; Lapidge, 'Some Latin Poems', p. 78, n. 86.

³¹⁹ s. 399-401, 403-406.

³²⁰ s. 1208. The reference to Hrothweard as a bishop appears in both Latin and Old English and is the following: '(...) et hoc fuit testimonio Kynsii episcopi de Berrucscire et Wulfhelmi archiepiscopi et Rodwardi episcopi (...)'; '(...) 7 þæt wæs be Winsies biscofes gewitnysse of Bærrucscire 7 Wulfhelm arcebiscop 7 Rodward biscop (...)'; as one can see, the Old English is certainly a translation of the Latin sentence. For the dating of the issuing of the charter, see: M. A. O' Donavon, 'An interim revision of Episcopal Dates for the Province of Canterbury, 850-950, II', *Anglo-Saxon England* (1973) vol. 2, p. 95; F. M. Stenton, *The Early History of the Abbey of Abingdon* (Reading, 1913) pp. 34-36.

³²¹ s. 413. There has been little discussion about the authenticity of this charter, cf: S. E. Kelley (ed.), *The Charters of Abingdon Abbey*, (Anglo-Saxon Charters, 2 vols.; Oxford, 2000-2001), no. 23. It must be noted that there is a charter which is dated to between 918 and 924, which is witnessed by Wulfstan as archbishop alongside archbishop Wulfhelm of Canterbury, see: s. 1206; Selsey Kelly does note that it the charter may have been based on authentic documentation but that what now survives is probably a combination of several records, cf: S. E. Kelly, *The Charters of Selsey* (Anglo-Saxon Charters 6; Oxford, 1998) pp. 66-70.

³²² s. 566. Wulfstan appears in the witness list, just after his contemporary archbishop of Canterbury, Oda, as follows: 'Wulstan p'sul.' This may be an abbreviation of *praesul*, which could mean 'bishop' in the early Middle (continued...)

charters signed by Wulfstan originated outside York and the kingdom of the Vikings.³²³

This short outline of the, lack of, charter activity of both the Viking kings and the archbishops seems to suggest one thing: there was no apparent native charter activity in the city of York during the Viking age. It might seem fruitful to compare this inactivity to the situation pre-866. Sadly, however, this is impossible for the Northumbrian charters have been lost, also in the harrying of the north.³²⁴ Based on the surviving charter evidence, it seems there is hardly any evidence of ruling from York at all, by either the Viking kings or the archbishops. However, given the information provided by Hugh on the fate of the York charters, our evidence is incomplete. Given the story of Guthfrith's grants to the community of St Cuthbert, it is very tempting to argue that the Viking kings did grant lands, but that none of the evidence has survived.

Minting coins at York

Now we come to the most significant part of evidence available for ruling from York: the surviving coins issued in that city. In comparison to other types of evidence, coins can provide unique information. Often coins can be dated very precisely, compared with the written record, because they often bear the name of a monarch. Though it might be difficult for a historian to work with this type of evidence, luckily we can, to a great extent, rely on professional overviews

(...continued)

Ages. The charter is deemed authentic, see: C. Hart, *The Early Charters of Eastern England* (Leicester, 1966) no. 7, p. 23; E. John, *Orbis Britanniae and Other Studies* (Leicester, 1966), p. 55. However, the case is of Wulfstan's position in 955 is complicated by the fact that there do survive charters of the same year which do contain the signature of Wulfstan as archbishop, see: s. 563-565, 568, 571.

³²³ s. 379, 393, 407, 409, 410, 413, 416-420, 422, 423, 425, 427, 428, 434-436, 479-481, 484, 485, 493-495, 497-499, 501, 505, 506, 509, 514, 517, 519-523, 525, 526, 528, 529, 531, 532, 535-537, 540, 542, 544, 546-550, 552, 552a, 553, 560, 563-566, 568, 570, 571, 578, 582, 605.

³²⁴ F. M. Stenton, *The Latin Charters of the Anglo-Saxon Period* (Oxford, 1955) p. 33.

by numismatists.³²⁵ Aside from the technical issues, a historian can adequately provide possible interpretations of the evidence.

Even given some of the advantages of numismatic evidence, the coinage of Jorvik is one of the most confusing types of evidence of the period for the historian to engage with. This is because the evidence goes against many of the apparent facts deducible from the written sources.³²⁶ Many historians have found it difficult to satisfyingly explain this clash of evidence. It will be up to scholars of this generation to sort out the mess of chronology through interdisciplinary approaches. That is, however, not the aim of this section; instead we will simply focus on who was responsible for the minting of coins in York.³²⁷ In addition, we will address the question why this is important. Does the control of the mint signal a ruler or could it be that an ‘administrator’ might be responsible for such a mundane task? We will first discuss the coins in the (likeliest) chronology of the issues; for the most sensible way to understand certain coins is in the context of the broader trends of the mint of York. Conclusions will be put off to the end of this section, in order to be able to provide a coherent argument based on the numismatic evidence.³²⁸

³²⁵ As indeed is done in this thesis, most notably: P. Grierson and M. Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum* (Volume 1: The Early Middle Ages (5th-10th centuries) (Cambridge 1986) and John North, *English Hammered Coinage* (Volume 1: The Early Anglo-Saxon to Henry III, c. 600-1272) (3rd edition; London, 1994).

³²⁶ Viking age Northumbria is not alone in this. Ninth-century Northumbrian coinage seems in serious discrepancy with the written sources; so far no satisfactory solution has yet been offered. See: Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, pp. 301-302; C. S. S. Lyon, ‘A reappraisal of the Sceatta and Styca Coinage of Northumbria’, *British Numismatic Journal* (1956), vol. 28, pp. 227-242; H. E. Pagan, ‘Northumbrian Numismatic Chronology in the Ninth Century’, *British Numismatic Journal* (1969), vol. 38, pp. 1-15.

³²⁷ For a recent overview of the coinage of the Viking kings at York in combination with a discussion of most aspects of the numismatic evidence, see: Megan Laura Gooch, *Money and Power in the Viking Kingdom of York, c. 895-954* (Doctoral thesis, Durham University) [<http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/3495>, accessed 1-1-2013].

³²⁸ At the time of writing this thesis, there exist two archaeological findings which, sadly, cannot be taken into consideration for they have not yet been adequately researched by archaeologists. The finds in question are the ‘V a l e o f Y o r k H o a r d’ [see: http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pe/v/vale_of_york_ward.aspx, accessed 17-12-2012], and excavations carried out at Hungate York [see: <http://www.dighungate.com/>, accessed 17-12-2012]. For the scope of this thesis, I am dependent on published analyses of archaeologists and, at the moment, these are
(continued...)

The first king of whom a coin survives is Guthfrith (880/885-894/895). A single, incomplete, coin was found in the Ashdon hoard, deposited between c. 890-895.³²⁹ The coin bears the incomplete inscription GUDEF.RE in combination with a small cross.³³⁰ From the date for the deposition of the hoard and the inscription on the coin, Mark Blackburn has concluded that the coin must have been one of Guthfrith, for he is the only known king of the period who qualifies for this identification. Blackburn does mention the possibility of an unknown king in the Danelaw, but does not find this likely. The RE part would most likely have read REX. The coin itself is dated to 893-895; however, the year 893 seems to be based on the start of Guthfrith's reign rather than on numismatic grounds. Based on the style of the coin, which shows strong similarities to coins found in the Stamford hoard,³³¹ Blackburn concludes that the coin was not minted at York but more probably in the Southern Danelaw. A possible explanation for the southern origin of the coin, given by Blackburn, is that York did not as yet have its own coinage and that Guthfrith's authority extended over the Southern Danelaw, thus he had his coins minted there. Another explanation may be that it was a copy of a York issue. Blackburn does conclude that 'whatever the circumstances lying behind this issue, it is evident that Guthfrith's coinage can only have been very small.'³³² With the current state of affairs, one can say little more than that Guthfrith seems to have issued a coinage at one point during his reign. Given the fact that the

³²⁸(...continued)

lacking. Hopefully, these two finds will enlighten historians in the future.

³²⁹ The date has been established based on the fact that the coins of Alfred contained in the hoard are of the 'Two-line type', which was the principal issue during the final phase of Alfred's coinage. This phase is dated to the 880s-890s. See: M. Blackburn, 'The Ashdon (Essex) Hoard and the Currency of the Southern Danelaw in the Late Ninth Century', *British Numismatic Journal* (1989) vol. 59, pp. 13, 15-16; Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 318. This hoard was found in 1984 in Essex and contains less than 120 coins; see: M. Blackburn and H. E. Pagan, 'A revised check-list of coin hoards from the British Isles, c. 500-1100', in *Anglo-Saxon Monetary History. Essays in memory of Michael Dolley*, ed. by M. A. S. Blackburn (Leicester, 1986) p. 294.

³³⁰ North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp. 109-110, plate 7, no. 30.

³³¹ This hoard was found in 1909, near Stamford. It contains less than 120 coins of either Anglo-Saxon, Viking or continental provenance. The hoard was deposited in c. 895. See: Blackburn, 'A revised check-list', p. 294.

³³² Blackburn, 'The Ashdon (Essex) Hoard', pp. 18-20 (p. 20); Grierson, *European Medieval Coinage*, pp. 319.

coin may have been minted in the Southern Danelaw, it might suggest that Guthfrith either did not actually reign from York, or that his authority extended to the Southern Danelaw; however, given the confusing state of evidence it is hard to argue either case.

We can venture more solid conclusions on ruling from York based on the next coins to be considered. These are known as the 'Sievert-Siefred-Cnut Group' and are dated to c. 895-902. It is from this coinage that the existence of kings Siefred and Cnut has been postulated. The coins all derive from the Cuerdale Hoard. This hoard was discovered in 1840 near the Ribble River. It contains 5,000 coins from the Viking age, of which 3,000 belong to the group of Siefred and Cnut. The dating of the hoard derives from the latest Continental coins contained in the hoard which are of Louis the Blind (which are dated to 901-902); a slightly later date of c. 903 has been suggested as well.³³³ We will now consider the different coins that were part of the Cuerdale hoard which are associated with York.

The coins of Siefred bear his name on the reverse side; often his name is accompanied by REX or preceded by a C, the meaning of which is unclear.³³⁴ Most of his coins contain the circular mint-signature on the obverse side which reads: EBRAICE CIVITAS or EB RAI CEC IV, mostly in combination with a cross which is sometimes surrounded by pellets.³³⁵ The combination of the name of the king in the Latin nominative with this mint-signature suggests Carolingian influence, as does the Karolus monogram on some coins; it has been suggested that the Viking kings employed Frankish moneyers - as was done in the Southern Danelaw with

³³³ Blackburn, 'A revised check-list', p. 294; C. S. S. Lyon and B. H. I. H. Stewart, 'The Northumbrian Viking Coins in the Cuerdale hoard', in *Anglo-Saxon Coins. Studies Presented to F. M. Stenton on the Occasion of his 80th Birthday*, ed. by R. H. M. Dolley (London 1961) pp. 98, 110.

³³⁴ For an example of a coin of Siefred, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 1.

³³⁵ The obverse and reverse sides were firmly established by Lyon and Stewart in 1961, see: Lyon, 'The Northumbrian Viking Coins', p. 98. The place of minting has been questioned in the past, most scholars argued for a French origin, but Lyon and Stewart argued convincingly that it can only have been minted in York, see: Lyon, 'The Northumbrian Viking Coins', pp. 110-112.

regard to the St Edmund Memorial coinage.³³⁶ What is interesting here is that the name of the king is on the reverse while the name of the city is on the obverse side; this suggests that the reference to York was deemed more important than the reference to the king. Coins with Siefred's name on the obverse side have also survived, with on the reverse side the designation REX. The coins of Cnut are similar to those of Siefred, with the name of the city on the obverse or with the name of Cnut on both sides of the coin, again, most of them, have the title REX.³³⁷ There are also coins, of both kings, containing either DNS.DS.REX³³⁸ or MIRABILIA FECIT on the obverse with the name of either king on the reverse.³³⁹ Given the religious inscriptions, one may venture that these were struck by authority of the archbishop, even though they are inspired by Frankish examples; the correct Latin of these coins and the Continental origin of the style strengthens the hypothesis that Frankish moneyers were responsible for these.

The most interesting coins, however, are those which bear the name of both kings. There are some coins which read on the obverse side the name of Siefred while containing on the reverse side the name of Cnut in combination with REX. These coins show close die-linkage with other coins of either king, which led Philip Grierson and Mark Blackburn to conclude that 'there may have been a period when the kings were minting concurrently'.³⁴⁰ One may also suggest from this evidence that there was a period in which the kings enjoyed co-rulership over the kingdom of York; however, the coins which contain both names denote only one as being REX.³⁴¹ What is clear, though, is that Cnut's coinage followed that of Siefred. According to Lyon

³³⁶ Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 321.

³³⁷ For an example of a coin of Cnut, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 2.

³³⁸ *Dominus Deus Rex*.

³³⁹ North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp. 110-112, plate 7, no. 31-32, plate 8, no. 1-2.

³⁴⁰ Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 321; Lyon, 'The Northumbrian Viking Coins', pp. 98-99, 110; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp. 110-112, plate 7, no. 31-40, plate 8, no. 1-2, 5-6, 8-15, 17.

³⁴¹ Lyon and Stewart at the same time recognize the possibility of a joint rulership of Siefred and Cnut, mainly because their chronological reconstruction does not allow for a long reign of Cnut, see: Lyon, 'The
(continued...)

and Stewart the coinage was clearly Christian; furthermore, ‘it was not a coinage which a Viking ruler could have been expected to originate without some external assistance.’³⁴²

From the Cuerdale hoard also survive some coins which are presumably to be attributed to Æthelwold (899-901/902).³⁴³ Æthelwold was a member of the house of Wessex. After the death of King Alfred, Æthelwold revolted against Alfred’s successor, Edward, and was accepted as king of the Danes in Northumbria; he was killed in battle against Edward in 903. Given his short reign it is remarkable any coins survive from him at all. These coins read, on the obverse side, ALVVALDUS, again in combination with a cross and pellets. Lyon and Stewart have raised doubts on this identification claiming that, based on the die-linkage of other coins from the hoard, the coins are too early to have belonged to Æthelwold; a possible explanation for the name, given by them, is that it might have been a moneyer, if ‘his coins could be shown not to be an integral part of the coinage [of the hoard]’.³⁴⁴ However, the coins are now generally attributed to Æthelwold’s reign.³⁴⁵

Alongside the coins of these kings, there were also some anonymous coins found in the same Cuerdale hoard. Some read on the obverse DNS.DS.REX, while the reverse has the name of the city of York. Most of the anonymous coins, however, read MIRABILIA FECIT.³⁴⁶ Both designs are inspired by invocations on Frankish coins. Due to the correct Latin on the coins, suggesting a correct understanding of the language, which the Danes presumably lacked, it has

³⁴¹(...continued)

Northumbrian Viking Coins’, pp. 114-117.

³⁴² Lyon, ‘The Northumbrian Viking Coins’, pp. 100, 105-108 (p. 100).

³⁴³ For an example of a coin of Æthelwold, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 3.

³⁴⁴ Lyon, ‘The Northumbrian Viking Coins’, pp. 108, 113 (p. 113).

³⁴⁵ C. E. Blunt, ‘Northumbrian Coins in the Name of Alwaldus’ *British Numismatic Journal* (1985) vol. 55, pp. 192-194; Grierson, *European Medieval Coinage*, p. 321; C. E. Blunt, B. H. I. H. Stewart and C. S. S. Lyon, *Coinage in Tenth-Century England. From Edward the Elder to Edgar’s Reform* (Oxford, 1989), p. 103; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, p. 111, no. 221.

³⁴⁶ For an example of a an anonymous coin bearing MIRABILIA FECIT, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 4.

been suggested that the clergy may have had a hand in these coinages. However, a competing hypothesis, mentioned above, is that the kings invited Frankish moneyers to organize the mint in the city, following the example set by cousins of the kings in the southern parts of the Danelaw, where the St Edmund Memorial coinage was organized by Frankish moneyers. Grierson has argued that the coins were intended to be anonymous because the reverse dies, reading either DNS.DS.REX or EBRAICE CIVITAS, were never used in combination with an obverse reading the name of Cnut or Siefred - indeed, their names always appear on the reverse.³⁴⁷

After the coinage of Siefred and Cnut, the St Peter coinage commenced; it is dated 905-927.³⁴⁸ All these coins derive from the mint of York, reading the mint signature on the reverse side. The obverse sides are dedicated to St Peter, the patron of the York Minster. This was the sole coinage issued from York from 905 until 920. Until 915, the weight of the coins had gradually decreased, making them less valuable; in 915 the weight was increased to a prior heavier standard. From c. 920 an anonymous issue survives, which introduced a sword on the obverse, a theme which was continued by the coinage of Sihtric. Around the same time, the sword was also introduced on the St Peter coinage, which until then had been bearing either a cross or a Karolus monogram. Again, around the same time - reconstructing the chronology of these coins is a near impossible task - Thor's hammer is introduced on the coins dedicated to St Peter; this theme is also found on coins from Rægnald onward.³⁴⁹ The implications of these similar designs will be discussed after the consideration of the rest of the Jorvik coinage.

From c. 920 to 926 there appears to have been a regular coinage by Viking rulers. The

³⁴⁷ Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, pp. 321-322; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp. 110-112; plate 8, no. 16-17.

³⁴⁸ For an example of a St Peter coin, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 12.

³⁴⁹ Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, pp. 322-323; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp. 113, 116, plate no. 24-25, 27, 40-42.

first of these kings is Rægnald (c. 914-920).³⁵⁰ His coinage is made up of three successive types, struck after the weight of the coins was increased c. 915. Smyth has argued that Rægnald was responsible for the weight increase.³⁵¹ The style of the coins from 915 onwards shows a resemblance to the ones containing Rægnald's name. The first two issues of the king himself contain his name, on the obverse, in combination with the mint signature of York on the reverse. These issues are copies of the coinage of King Edward the Elder of Wessex, whose coinage was in turn copied from papal issues of Benedict IV and of those of Louis III. The last type of Rægnald coins introduces Thor's hammer to the design of the coins, next to Rægnald's name on the obverse side. The dating of the coins is an issue of debate, for they are either attributed to Rægnald's first reign, c. 911 to c. 914, or to his second reign from 919-920. The latter dating is to be preferred, given the designs of the St Peter coinage which would otherwise need to be stretched back to c. 911-914, which is not supported by the numismatic evidence.³⁵²

The next king, Sihtric Guthfrithson (920-927), seems to have had at least partial control of the mint of York between 921-926/927, when coins were minted with his name on it; all these bore either a sword or Thor's hammer, often in combination with a cross.³⁵³ The coins lack a reference to the mint of York; instead they contain the names of the moneyers.³⁵⁴ They are similar to the St Peter coinage of the time and the two coinages were most likely minted simultaneously. Based on stylistic grounds as well as on the lack of reference to York, the coins of Sihtric may

³⁵⁰ For an example of a coin of Rægnald, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 5.

³⁵¹ Smyth, *Scandinavian York*, vol. 1, pp. 105-107.

³⁵² Blunt, *Coinage in tenth-century England*, p. 105; Grierson, *European Medieval Coinage*, pp. 322-323; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, p. 113, plate 8, no. 22-24; cf.: R. H. M. Dolley, 'An unpublished Irish hoard of "St Peter" pence', *Numismatic Chronicle* (1957) vol. 17, 123-132; R. H. M. Dolley, 'The Anglo-Danish and Anglo-Norse coinages of York', in *Viking Age York and the North*, ed. by R. A. Hall (CBA Res. Rep. 27; London, 1978) pp. 26-31; R. H. M. Dolley, 'Dateringen af de seneste St. Petersmønter fra York', *Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad* (1982), pp. 82-92.

³⁵³ For an example of a coin of Sihtric Guthfrithson, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 6.

³⁵⁴ One coin might refer to the place where it was minted. The obverse reads: 'CACTADAESPIT' or 'CASTDAEORT', which might be read as the word *castra* followed by a place name, see: Blunt, *Coinage in tenth-century England*, p. 107.

have been minted, in part or in its entirety, at a mint in the Five Boroughs, possibly Lincoln.³⁵⁵ Blunt, Stewart and Lyon argued that it is likely that the St Peter coinage was continued in York while Sihtric's coins were minted south of the Humber.³⁵⁶ That would mean that the St Peter coinage was dominant in York.

After Sihtric, Guthfrith (927) reigned for a year, but no coins survive from him. Then, King Athelstan of Wessex came to the throne, ruling from 927-939, and he took over control of the mint in York. From his reign two issues survive. The first issue reads on the obverse the name of the king in combination with REX; the reverse contains the name of the moneyer at the bottom while the top displays a tower or reliquary above a straight line. The second issue is similar, though the obverse adds the name of the York mint, while the reverse contains the name of the city in combination with the name of the moneyer, Regnald. Regnald was the main moneyer for most of Athelstan's reign.³⁵⁷

After Athelstan's reign, Olaf Guthfrithson (939-941) came to power and during his reign three issues of coins were struck.³⁵⁸ The coins bear his name in combination with the title CUNUNC; the reverse side contains the name of the moneyer. Some of the coins attributed to Olaf were struck in the region of the Five Boroughs. In York, the moneyer Rægnald, who had been minting for Athelstan, was disposed of and a new design for the coins was introduced, with the Old Norse title *cununc* for the king and *monetr* for the moneyer - though the latter quickly reverted back to the Latin *moneta*. The coins also bear the depiction of a raven.³⁵⁹ All these

³⁵⁵ Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 323; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, p. 113, plate 8, no. 27.

³⁵⁶ Blunt, *Coinage in tenth-century England*, p. 107.

³⁵⁷ Blunt, *Coinage in tenth-century England*, p. 109; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, p. 137, plate 11, no. 24.

³⁵⁸ For an example of a coin of Olaf Guthfrithson, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 7.

³⁵⁹ Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, pp. 323-324; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp. 113-114, plate 8, no. 28-29.

elements suggest a strengthening of Scandinavian influence on the coinage, possibly a result of the long reign of the English king Athelstan.

The coins of Olaf Sihtricson are sometimes hard to distinguish from those of his predecessor, due to their identical first names.³⁶⁰ The fact that Olaf Sihtricson enjoyed two periods of ruling does not help in understanding his coinage either. Generally, three types of coins have been attributed to his first reign (941-943/944); however, these types continued to be struck in the reign of his successor, Rægnald Guthfrithson (943-944).³⁶¹ It is further confusing that two of the types of Olaf Sihtricson were also minted by a king named Sihtric, according to the surviving coins.³⁶² There is no evidence from the written sources for this king; based on numismatic evidence his reign is dated to c. 942-943. Sihtric could not have been a moneyer, as the coins denote him as CUNUNC. Coins of Olaf Sihtricson were minted not only in York, but in Southumbria as well, possibly at Stamford or Lincoln; the coins of Sihtric II and Rægnald Guthfrithsson seem to have been minted in York.³⁶³ The chronology of these different coins is not our immediate concern; more important is that in this unstable period in the history of York, with so many kings vying for control of the city, the minting of coins in their names continued.

After the expulsion of the kings Olaf Sihtricson and Rægnald by King Edmund, Northumbria was part of the kingdom of England ruled by Edmund, and, after him, Eadred. These kings minted coins at York as well, and Edmund used a moneyer from York. Edmund also used an Anglo-Saxon design for his coins in combination with the Scandinavian CUNUNC.³⁶⁴ The continued use of a Scandinavian element by an Anglo-Saxon king, has been interpreted by

³⁶⁰ For an example of a coin of Olaf Sihtricson, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 8.

³⁶¹ For an example of a coin of Rægnald Guthfrithson, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 10.

³⁶² For an example of a coin of Sihtric, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 9..

³⁶³ Grierson, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 324; North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp. 114-115, plate 8, no. 31-33, 35-36.

³⁶⁴ Mark Blackburn, 'The Coinage of Scandinavian York', in *Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York*, ed. by R. A. Hall *et al.* (The Archaeology of York, Volume 8; York, 2002), p.336.

Blackburn as a way to appeal to more than one audience.³⁶⁵ At the end of this section, we will address this, to us, strange combination of symbols and inscriptions.

The last coins attributed to a Viking king are those of Eric Bloodaxe (first reign 948; second reign 952-954).³⁶⁶ Two issues survive, one dated to 947-948, the other to 952-954. They simply read his name in combination with the title REX on the obverse, while the reverse contains the name of the moneyer. They show crosses in combination with swords.³⁶⁷ What is most important is that this coinage demonstrates how even a king who reigned for such a short time as Eric, and is portrayed in the sources as one of the least stable kings of York, was able to produce a coinage.

After this overview of the coinage minted (mainly) at York, it is time to consider the possible conclusions to be drawn from this. The most obvious conclusion seems to be that the Viking kings had control of the mint from c. 895-905 and from c. 920-954, with some intervals when a West-Saxon king reigned. Further, it can be concluded that there was a marked Frankish influence on the design of the coins; whether this was due to Frankish moneyers who were shipped in or due to other factors will be considered below. At times, the coinage also shows that the kings enjoyed authority beyond their kingdom of York, namely in the Danelaw where they had, sometimes, coins minted in their names. Their power may, at times, have been greater than hitherto supposed. The last obvious conclusion is that the York mint was, from c. 895 onward in uninterrupted use.

The different designs of the coins have been interpreted in different ways. I want to address these designs briefly, as well as put forward an explanation of my own. On the coinage

³⁶⁵ Blackburn, 'The Coinage', p. 336.

³⁶⁶ For an example of a coin of Eric, see Appendix III, p. 169, no. 11.

³⁶⁷ North, *English Hammered Coinage*, pp. 113, 115-116, plate 8, no. 38-39.

pre-920, the main symbol which is used on the coins is the cross, which is designated Christian by scholars. However, from c. 920 onwards, secular elements were introduced; the depiction of Thor's hammer, swords, and, between 941-944, a trefoil-shaped shield.³⁶⁸ All these, but especially Thor's hammer, have often been explained by pointing to the supposed paganism of the Viking kings.³⁶⁹ Rollason interprets the appearance of these designs as the Viking kings gaining influence over the minting of coins in York; the archbishops, in Rollason's view, compromised on the design.³⁷⁰ Rollason's argument is based on the assumption that the archbishops minted the coins, which is in turn based on the Christian designs of the coins pre-920 - though, as noted above, the control of the mint by the archbishops cannot be proven from the evidence.

I would like to raise three other possible explanations for these designs. Firstly, the designs may have been a way of affirming the distinct northern identity versus the growing power of Wessex in the south.³⁷¹ After a period of anonymous coinage (the St Peter coinage), King Rægnald may have felt the need to affirm his authority and break with the traditional designs. By introducing the secular symbols on the coinage he may have consciously tried to affirm a Scandinavian identity in Northumbria. Another explanation may be that the aristocracy gained control over the mint c. 920, after which they introduced more aristocratic themes, which might have been represented by the appearance of a sword and Thor's hammer.

While the two explanations given so far have their merit, I think it more likely that the designs were a result of cultural exchange during the years 866-920. How many Scandinavians

³⁶⁸ The designs have often been termed 'pagan' given their connotation with Norse paganism. However, the term 'secular' may be preferred, given the fact that these designs are not necessarily a reflection religion. This has been suggested to me by Dr. Jane Hawkes at the University of York.

³⁶⁹ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 226-227.

³⁷⁰ Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 227-228.

³⁷¹ Blackburn notes that this is one of the functions of the coinage which started c. 895, see: Blackburn, 'The Coinage', pp. 331, 346.

settled in York is unknown, but surely there must have been some cultural exchange with Scandinavians during the period. What form such exchange would have taken is unknown. However, one might suppose that both the native Northumbrians and the incoming Vikings would have appropriated cultural elements of each other, which in turn may have formed a new cultural reality. Symbols, traditionally associated with Norse paganism, may have been appropriated by native Northumbrians, just as the Christian symbols may have been taken over by the Scandinavians. The fact that these symbols were used for a long time, suggests they were not viewed as unusual; rather, they were accepted as part of the culture. While the reality of such tendencies are unknown to us, such developments may have, possibly, resulted in the designs of these coins, thus representing a cultural mix.

Recently, Megan Gooch has argued, in her unpublished doctoral thesis *Money and Power in the Viking Kingdom of York, c. 895-954*, that ‘by using religious imagery, and by promoting military prowess and lineage through the design of these coins’ the rule of the Viking kings was legitimized.³⁷² Indeed, the coinage seems to have been a way of asserting the authority of the ruling king. Her view of the symbols is compatible with my ideas on interculturalisation, for if symbols were not accepted as valid and culturally relevant by the viewers, the message of legitimization would be lost on the audience.

Finally, I would like to consider the possibility of the archbishops being responsible for the minting of coins in York, despite the lack of any clear evidence of their involvement. The strongest case for their involvement can be made for the period c. 895-920. This can be argued if one accepts the hypothesis that the St Peter coinage was an issue regulated by the archbishops; this hypothesis has not found broad recognition among numismatists though.³⁷³ The anonymous

³⁷² Gooch, *Money and Power*, pp. 111-112 (p. 112).

³⁷³ Blackburn, ‘The Coinage’, p. 333; C. E. Blunt, ‘Northumbrian Coins’, vol. 55, p. 194.

coins from the Cuerdale hoard, which bear Christian inscriptions along with Carolingian designs, may be interpreted as coinage minted on behalf of the archbishops as well. While numismatists have argued that Frankish moneyers came to York and introduced these Carolingian designs, these inscriptions might, perhaps, be alternatively interpreted as imitations of the Carolingian design. This does not seem so far-fetched if one considers that in 895 coinage needed to be reintroduced in York. The possibility of Frankish moneyers in York seems to me just as likely as local people imitating designs found on coins circulating in York, which was a major trade town in the region.

The religious inscriptions make the involvement of the York clergy, possibly in the guise of the archbishop, more likely. This would mean that after c. 903 the archbishops took over the control of the mint entirely until 920, and lost control in 927 when Athelstan took over. This is not so far-fetched if one considers that during the Anglian period of the city coins were minted in name of the archbishops.³⁷⁴ In chapter six, I will indeed put forward a case for the involvement of the archbishops.

Taken together, the observations made above show a constant use of the York mint from c. 895 onwards, which at least suggests a need for coinage in the city during our period. The designs of the coins suggest a certain degree of interculturalism between the different ethnicities within the city. The fact that most coins were struck in the name of a king suggests that these kings were recognized as the authority figure in the city. The latter does not necessarily mean they were responsible for the minting of the coins.

³⁷⁴ The archbishops Ecgberht (734-766), Eanbald II (796-?, or possibly, based on numismatic evidence, 796-c.840), Wigmund (837-854 or possibly, also based on numismatic evidence, 848-858), Wulfhere (854-900, or possibly, again based on coinage, 865-900), see: North, *English Hammered Coinage*, p. 73.

Evidence for patronage from York

In written sources, patronage is often associated with good rulers. Obviously, the ones who decide whether a ruler was good or not were those who may or may not have benefited from whatever patronage the king chose to hand out. Patronage in this section is meant in the widest sense of the word. While patronage is often associated with the arts, here it is used as any commission, gift, or endorsement by someone to any undertaking, person, or institution. Evidence of patronage may seem less ambiguous; sculpture, for instance, seems to lack an agenda and be free from the manipulation one may encounter in written sources. However, this line of thought is deceptively simple, for sculpture may have had an agenda as well. A king may have tried through the patronage of sculpture to present himself in a certain light or to make his influence felt in a certain area. Furthermore, establishing who was the patron of sculpture is near-impossible. With any kind of evidence, one is always dependent on its survival - historians always have to take into account the evidence which may have been lost through the ages.

In this section, we will first address the supposed patronage of the community of St Cuthbert by king Guthfrith; next, we will consider the evidence of patronage from sculpture; lastly, we will address some aspects of the development of York during the Viking Age and the involvement of either the kings or the archbishop.

The story of the elevation of King Guthfrith through the intervention by St Cuthbert has already been discussed above, in the section on the contemporary sources.³⁷⁵ Most important is the claim made, in the *Historia de Cuthberto*, that Guthfrith granted lands to the community of St Cuthbert. We have pointed out that this cannot be proven, though one might suppose that, in this way, Guthfrith would have secured the cooperation of the monks. Viewed in this manner,

³⁷⁵ See above, pp. 74-75.

it may be interpreted as evidence of patronage, though the evidence is far from unambiguous. It is interesting that the monks of Cuthbert chose to portray a Viking king as patron of the community. Why would they choose such a king if it was not true? Given the fact Guthfrith was buried in the York Minster, he is the only Viking king of whom can be said, that he was at least viewed as a Christian. If it is true that the monks copied grants contained in treasure-books into the *Historia de Cuthberto*,³⁷⁶ it may very well be true that Guthfrith was a patron of the community.

Another possible form of patronage is that of the arts, which, in Viking age Northumbria, means sculpture. A considerable amount of sculpture has survived from York. Much has survived in the fabric of parish churches in the city, with some significant differences in quality. In the foundations of the Norman Minster of York, large shafts, dated to the Viking age, have been found as well. In excavations between 1966-1973, the corpus of sculpture from York was greatly extended when Derek Phillips discovered a cemetery beneath the south transept of the current Minster. The grave slabs found there were reused in the Norman period, but it has been conclusively shown that they do, in fact, belong to the Viking age. This discovery has made it clear, for the first time, that the sculpture found was used as grave covers; furthermore, their unambiguously belonging to the Viking age makes it possible to date other sculpture with similar decorations.³⁷⁷

The grave-slabs found under the Minster and the shafts used in the foundation of the Norman Minster form the so-called 'York Metropolitan School'. Another piece belonging to this school was discovered in excavations at Coppergate. Scholars have reconstructed this school by examination of the similar carvings on the stone. The slabs found show superimposed crosses

³⁷⁶ See above, pp. 67,69

³⁷⁷ Richard N. Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture in Northern England* (London, 1980) p. 25; James Lang, *Corpus of Anglo-Saxon Stone Sculpture, volume III: York and Eastern Yorkshire* (Oxford, 1991) pp. 26, 39.

which bear inward-facing animal heads, which divide the slab into panels which are in turn decorated with images of beasts. Similar carvings have been found on the Coppergate fragment and in the East Midlands. Based on these carvings, which resemble the Scandinavian Jellinge style, the objects have been dated to the period ‘when York was open to Scandinavian fashions through Viking patronage, and this would give a date range of c. 870 (the period of Danish consolidation) to c. 954 (...).’³⁷⁸ The shafts attributed to this school are decorated with beast- or bird-chains; the shafts ‘display the same fusion of Anglian and Scandinavian traditions as the slabs (...)’.³⁷⁹ Another group, much smaller, from York has been identified as belonging to a single workshop different from that of the Metropolitan School; this sculpture has been dated to the Viking age as well based on their decorations.³⁸⁰

The difficult question about sculpture is, what can be concluded from it? It is clear that there were workshops in the city producing sculpture for clients. Furthermore, the sculpture bears a mixture of Anglian and Scandinavian themes, revealing a strong Scandinavian influence on the city, in contrast with, for example, the sculpture north of the Tees which rarely bears Scandinavian themes.³⁸¹ It cannot be argued simply that Scandinavians forced their themes upon the sculpture. Before c. 983 there were no stone carvings in Scandinavia - to the Vikings, it was a foreign art. As Richard Bailey put it: ‘It follows from this that the very existence of Viking-age sculpture in the settlement areas implies the continuity of a distinctive element in the native English culture of these regions.’³⁸² Therefore, it seems there was an absorption of foreign elements, enriching an already existing tradition. This is, for example, why sculpture cannot be

³⁷⁸ Lang, *York and Eastern Yorkshire*, p. 39.

³⁷⁹ Lang, *York and Eastern Yorkshire*, p. 40.

³⁸⁰ Lang, *York and Eastern Yorkshire*, pp. 39-40.

³⁸¹ Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, pp. 29, 34-36.

³⁸² Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, p. 76-77.

used to argue whether or not the Vikings were Christian, as it is far from clear that they commissioned the art work.³⁸³

This last observation brings us to the core of the problem. Peter Sawyer has claimed the following: ‘there are in the north of England a large number of stone carvings by English craftsmen in the English tradition in which attempts have been made to satisfy Scandinavian tastes.’³⁸⁴ Sawyer uses this as evidence for his argument that the Scandinavian settlers were relatively few in numbers.³⁸⁵ However, the problem is that he supposes the sculpture was made for Scandinavians; this is far from clear. First of all, the accurate dating of sculpture is near-impossible; ‘Viking age’ or ‘Anglian’ is the closest scholars have gotten, so it is not possible to date sculpture to the start of the Scandinavian settlement. Furthermore, there is no evidence of the nationality of the sculptor. Granted, sculpture was unknown to the Vikings when they arrived, but once they settled some may have taken up the craft. Except for showing cultural exchange between Northumbrians and Vikings, the sculpture does not reveal anything about patrons or sculptors. One might argue, based on the sculpture found under the York Minster, that some of the archbishops must have patronized some sculpture; however, this cannot be attributed automatically to the archbishop for it is unknown who had a say in burial practices at the Minster. Bailey has argued, based on similar sculpture from different churches within York, that in the city ‘it seems that there was a well-organized workshop which supplied standard types of grave-cover, decorated with standard forms of ornament, to the graveyards of the city.’³⁸⁶ Who the commissioners of such sculpture were, remains hidden from history.

Having considered the possible patronage of the community of St Cuthbert by Guthfrith

³⁸³ Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, pp. 34, 76-77, 254-255 (pp. 76-77).

³⁸⁴ Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, p. 163.

³⁸⁵ Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, pp. 148-176.

³⁸⁶ Bailey, *Viking Age Sculpture*, p. 254.

and the difficulties of sculpture, there remains to discuss, briefly, the possible involvement of kings or archbishops in developing the city of York. Asser describes, in his *De rebus gestis Ælfredi*, how the Vikings, after having arrived at York, fortified themselves within the fortifications of the city (*moenia urbis*). Then, as we know, they were attacked by the army of Ælla and Osberht, who, according to Asser, breached the wall of York; they were able to do so because the city lacked strong walls.³⁸⁷ This statement cannot be taken at face value though, for it is unlikely that Asser was well informed on York, or that he had visited the city in his lifetime. He bases his account on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, merely adding the information on the walls of the city. According to David Rollason he may have added this information because he knew the Danes were to fortify York later, though he adds this interpretation is not strong. Asser's addition seems to be ultimately based on the *Historia de Cuthberto* which simply claimed that the Vikings rebuilt (*reedificauit*) the city.³⁸⁸ The rebuilding of at least parts of the city walls is corroborated by archaeological evidence which shows that in the Viking period a wall had been built over the Roman fortress wall.³⁸⁹ This restoring of the walls does not seem unlikely given the events c. 866 and the military campaigns of the Vikings and, later, the Wessex kings.

Two other issues in the development of the city must be addressed, firstly the growth of the city and secondly the names of the city streets. The first issue has been addressed by Rollason, who claims to counter the view that the development of the city was due to the Viking kings. Rollason addresses this issue because 'the view that the Viking kings were sophisticated rulers'

³⁸⁷ Asser, *De rebus gestis Ælfredi*, chapter 27, in *Asser's Life of King Alfred together with the Annals of Saint Neot's erroneously ascribed to Asser*, ed. by W. H. Stevenson (Oxford, 1904), pp. 22-23 ('Non enim tunc adhuc illa ciuitas firmos et stabilitos muros illis temporibus habebat.').

³⁸⁸ *Historia de Cuthberto*, ch. 14, pp. 52-53.

³⁸⁹ Royal Commission on Historical Monuments, *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments of the City of York* (volume 2: The defences; London, 1972) pp. 111-115.

is based in part on the archaeological evidence.³⁹⁰ However, while all archaeologists have, rightfully, drawn attention to the immense growth of the city during the Viking age,³⁹¹ none have specifically attributed this to the Viking kings. Where Richard Hall has addressed the question whether the Viking kings had a model to base the development of York on, he concludes they lacked such a model.³⁹² Of course it is impossible to prove whether the Viking kings or the archbishops had a hand in the development of the city. It seems more natural to suppose that the development of the city was the result of the increased trade which may have been partly the result of the Scandinavian control of the city.³⁹³

A similar case can be made for the street-names of York. While these do show marked Scandinavian influence, there is no evidence to connect these with ‘town-planning’ on the part of the Viking kings. In fact, it is even impossible to show that Scandinavian street-names originated in the Viking age, given the late date these names appear in documentation; still, we might suppose that some must have come into being during the Viking age.³⁹⁴ The coining of such street-names should hardly be attributed to the Viking kings. Instead, it seems to me, that this ties in with the cultural exchange already discussed above.³⁹⁵ A great deal of the evidence shows a marked Scandinavian influence alongside a strong Christian presence in the city. In my opinion this is evidence of intercultural exchange of which the exact processes are unknown, but which resulted in the mixture of Scandinavian and Northumbrian elements in York.

Taken together, the evidence for patronage from York is slim. However, there do exist

³⁹⁰ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 220.

³⁹¹ Hall, *Book of Viking Age York*, p. 41. Also, see chapter 1, p. 1, n. 2.

³⁹² Hall, *Book of Viking Age York*, p. 31-33, 93.

³⁹³ Mainman, ‘Craft and Economy’, pp. 459-487.

³⁹⁴ Gillian Fellows-Jensen, ‘The Anglo-Scandinavian Street-Names of York’, in *Aspects of Anglo-Scandinavian York*, ed. by R. A. Hall *et al* (The Archaeology of York, Volume 8; York, 2002), pp. 357-371.

³⁹⁵ See above, pp. 96-97.

traces of what might have been a result of patronage, especially the surviving sculpture. The evidence of the community of St Cuthbert shows that a Viking king could, and at times did, grant lands to a Christian community, possibly to gain their cooperation. The surviving sculpture shows that the arts must have found their patrons, though their identity remains unknown. The development of the city, an important part of Rollason's attempt to discredit the Viking kings, should, in my opinion, be viewed independently from the involvement of the Viking kings or the archbishops of York. The sculpture and the street-names do, however, support my case, argued in relation to the designs of the coinage of York, for interculturalisation.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered the contemporary evidence for ruling from Jorvik by either the Viking kings or the archbishops. After this overview, the divergent historiographical views on the kingdom of York make more sense. Tangible evidence for York as capital of the Viking kingdom or as the political centre of the archbishops is mainly of a numismatic nature, while other types of evidence are scarce.

The minting of coins in the city gives the impression of strong control exercised from c. 920 onwards by the Viking kings, for if they ruled the city there would be coins bearing their names. This would suggest York being the centre of the Viking kingdom and or at least a centre of authority of the Viking kings. However, what to make of the small issues of Guthfrith (c. 895), Siefred, and Cnut (c. 895-903)? How best to explain the St Peter coinage between c. 903- c. 920? Rollason saw it as thus: 'the St Peter's coins mark their ascendancy with the name of the patron saint of their cathedral which is the only name on these coins. The use of Christian inscriptions

on the coinage of Siefred and Cnut is further evidence that minting was in their hands.’³⁹⁶ However, as has been noted, numismatists argue Frankish moneyers struck these coins. When trying to combine the evidence of the coinage with the written sources the historian faces severe problems, for these two types of evidence do not corroborate each other. This is where it gets interesting, of course. The coinage shows the deficiency of the written sources for the Viking kings and their kingdom; it shows that the historian needs to look beyond his familiar tools. Contrary to the written sources, the coinage hardly gives the impression of ‘unstable and violent Viking kings’.³⁹⁷

However rich the numismatic evidence may seem, other evidence scarcely gives the same impression of kingship. In these sources, one is supplied with little information on the Viking kings, undoubtedly due to the perspectives of these narratives. There is no evidence of the importance of York for the kings, except from 866 and 867. In fact, from these sources, with the exception of some diplomacy undertaken on behalf of the kings, the archbishop, or the aristocracy, we hardly get any impression of ruling from Jorvik at all.

The evidence from laws and charters is similar to that of the other written sources. There is no proof that laws were issued between 866 and 954 in the Viking kingdom of York, let alone in the city itself, though the same is true for the Anglian period. Though there are some references to Danish customs and laws from other sources, there is no evidence that law was ever made. However, we may suppose law was made orally, or that law codes did not survive. There were no charters issued by the kings, whereas the archbishops only witnessed charters and these are from the reigns of Wessex kings; however, we must keep in mind that it seems many of the pre-conquest charters were lost in the harrying of the north.

³⁹⁶ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 228.

³⁹⁷ Rollason, *Northumbria*, p. 228.

The evidence of patronage is rich, especially when it comes to sculpture, but it is difficult to extract historical fact from it. Apart from the possible patronage of the community of St Cuthbert by Guthfrith, which may be a later tradition or, in my opinion more likely, has to be seen as a political alliance by a new king and an older community, there is no evidence of patronage by the kings or archbishops from the city. The Vikings did seem to have restored part of the city walls, but this is no evidence for ruling the city and might just have been a temporary action given the uncertain fate of the kingdom.

Conclusions on the ruling of Jorvik by either the Viking kings or the archbishops are very difficult to make. Drawing together all the evidence discussed in this chapter, it seems the kings actively controlled the minting of coins, while from other evidence associated with ruling, the kings seem to have had no hand in controlling the city. Archbishops seem to have been slightly more active in charter-witnessing, though these charters were all issued in relation to the administration of the Wessex kings. It is important to remember that most of the evidence may have been lost. Still, without the coinage one would be tempted to conclude that neither the Viking kings nor the archbishops ruled, but the numismatic evidence makes it much more complicated. As stated at the start of this chapter, this conclusion is based solely on the evidence considered here. In the next chapter we will discuss some characteristics of Anglo-Saxon England which will form part of my more positive hypothesis on ruling from Jorvik, which will be set out in chapter six.

Chapter 5: King and Archbishop in Their Social Context

In this chapter I will consider some important characteristics of Anglo-Saxon England and the early Middle Ages which form an important aspect of my final argument in the next chapter. I will take a more general approach than I have done thus far, focussing on models instead of particulars. General descriptions inevitably lead to distortions of the state of affairs described; the situation addressed in this chapter will result in too neat a model. However, such a model will be helpful in order to understand the particulars of York and the Viking Age.

The first characteristic to be discussed is the functioning of personal bonds in early medieval society. From this very general aspect we will move to the kingdoms, first considering the way the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms coexisted before the Viking age. Next, I will address the question how these kingdoms functioned in terms of administration. I will end with a basic model of Anglo-Saxon society, focussing on the relationship between the kings and the church.

Kingdoms and Administration in the Context of Personal Bonds

It is generally agreed that the early Middle Ages were characterized by personal bonds between people. The most important personal bond would have been the bond between kin; other types of bonds would have been modelled on that. The historian Gerard Althoff has written an important work on personal bonds with regard to the early Middle Ages on the continent. He acknowledges that there must have been all sorts of possible bonds between people, but the most important ones were that of kin, friendship and lordship. The last two would have been similar to the first, with the difference that they were between people not belonging to the same family. Furthermore, lordship would have been a bond between two people in which one was in some way superior to the other. Althoff argues that to survive in the dangerous times of the early

Middle Ages, one could simply not do without such bonds. One automatically belonged to a kin group through birth, but bonds of friendship and lordship had to be formed. They functioned as protection in a harsh world. A bond of friendship could be formed between, for instance, people with a common goal or interest. A bond of lordship was utilized by, among others, the king. It was the bond between a lord and his vassals. However, it was not a one-way contract, as is often believed, as both parties had rights and obligations; the right of the vassal was *consilium* and *consensus*.³⁹⁸

Althoff's book is concerned with the continent without reference to Britain; however, there is evidence that supports his observations and ideas from Anglo-Saxon sources which make it possible to argue that society in Anglo-Saxon England worked similarly. There exists scholarly consensus that Anglo-Saxon England depended on personal bonds. On bonds of kinship, Dorothy Whitelock wrote the following: 'Every individual depended on the support of the kindred in all the affairs of life (...)'; on kingship she wrote: 'the lord has his band of followers (...) who share "the joys of the hall" in time of peace and who should be prepared to die for him in time of war.'³⁹⁹ Another scholar who hardly needs any introduction, Frank M. Stenton, wrote on bonds of kingship: 'Everywhere in the Germanic world, the ruler, whether king or chief, was attended by a body-guard of well-born companions.'⁴⁰⁰ He goes on to explain that it was expected of these companions that they would be willing to die for their lord in battle. That this was not a one-way street is also explained by Stenton: 'It was probably accepted throughout the north that every member of a king's household might expect to receive an endowment in land from his lord.'⁴⁰¹

While the quote states a member of the household, Stenton makes clear, later in the same

³⁹⁸ Gerard Althoff, *Family, Friends and Followers. Political and Social bonds in Early Medieval Europe* (Cambridge 2004) pp. 1-64, 102-135.

³⁹⁹ Dorothy Whitelock, *The Beginnings of English Society* (Middlesex, 1952) 29, 39.

⁴⁰⁰ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 302.

⁴⁰¹ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 306.

paragraph, that this does concern the above-mentioned ‘companions’.⁴⁰² On Anglo-Saxon kinship in society, Stenton wrote: ‘Of its [i.e. the ‘tie of kinship’s’] importance as a protection to individuals there can, of course, be no doubt.’⁴⁰³ More recently, Thomas Charles-Edwards has argued for personal bonds based on friendship, which could either derive from unalterable origins, such as kinship, or from positive interaction between individuals. Charles-Edwards points out that Anglo-Saxon government ‘was quite as much a domination by the king’s friends as an administration by the king’s officers’, indicating the lasting importance of personal bonds, even when administrative elements developed.⁴⁰⁴ The scholars discussed above are not alone in asserting the importance of personal bonds in Anglo-Saxon times, proving the consensus of this view.⁴⁰⁵

Having considered the functioning of personal bonds in the early Middle Ages, we will briefly consider the nature of the coexistence of, and competition between, the different Anglo-Saxon kingdoms before the Viking age. Then we will zoom in on such a kingdom, addressing the administration of the king and the Anglo-Saxon ‘state’. In both topics, personal bonds will remain an important theme, for I will argue that both need to be understood within the context of social bonds.

The history of the different kingdoms in early Anglo-Saxon England is mainly derived from Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History*; thereafter our knowledge derives mainly from the *Anglo-*

⁴⁰² Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, p. 306.

⁴⁰³ Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 302-306 (p. 315).

⁴⁰⁴ Thomas Charles-Edwards, ‘Anglo-Saxon Kinship Revisited’, in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century. An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. by John Hines (Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology, volume 2; San Marino, 1997), pp. 171-173, 177, 200.

⁴⁰⁵ Heinrick Härke, ‘Early Anglo-Saxon Social Structure’, in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century. An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. by John Hines (Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology, volume 2; San Marino, 1997), p. 137; Henry Lyon, ‘Kinship in Anglo-Saxon England’, *Anglo-Saxon England* (1974), vol. 3, pp. 199-200, 202-205, 209; David E. Thornton, ‘Communities and Kinship’, in *A Companion to the Early Middle Ages. Britain and Ireland, c. 500-1100*, ed. by Pauline Stafford (Oxford, 2009), pp. 91-106.

Saxon Chronicle. Both show a plurality of kingdoms in England. Traditionally scholars spoke of a heptarchy of seven kingdoms; however, more recent research has shown that there may have been more kingdoms than that. There are indications that there existed a certain hierarchy between these kingdoms, with kings of different rankings. Bede ends his work with a list of kings whose power extended over all Anglo-Saxon kingdoms; these kings are called *bretwaldas* in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. The meaning of this term remains a matter of debate. According to James Campbell, and many now agree with his view, the title of *bretwalda* was ‘more likely (...) used, and Bede’s intention was, to indicate rulers whose authority, at least for part of their reigns, extended over other kingdoms.’⁴⁰⁶ The latter description of a king whose authority extended beyond his own realm is recognised for the Anglo-Saxon period and may simply be called ‘overlordship’. A king would have subordinate kings under him who would pay tribute and provide military service.⁴⁰⁷ The co-existence and competition of these kingdoms must, therefore, be understood in the context of lordship.

One should be wary of viewing the history of these competing kingdoms as deterministically merging into one. We know that the Wessex kings would become the first kings of the whole of England. However, in the time of Bede it would perhaps have seemed that either Mercia or Northumbria would come out on top;⁴⁰⁸ or, even more likely, it would have seemed to contemporary people that the status quo would simply persist.

It is now time to consider how these different kingdoms were organized. We will focus

⁴⁰⁶ Campbell, ‘The First Christian Kings’, pp. 53-54; David N. Dumville, ‘The Terminology of Overkingship in Early Anglo-Saxon England’, in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century. An Ethnographic Perspective*, ed. by John Hines (Studies in Historical Archaeoethnology, volume 2; San Marino, 1997), pp. 345-373 (=whole article).

⁴⁰⁷ David N. Dumville, ‘The Terminology of Overkingship’, in *The Anglo-Saxons from the Migration Period to the Eighth Century - An Ethnographic Perspective* (Woodbridge, 1997) pp. 345-365; Barbara Yorke, ‘King and Kingship’, in *A Companion to the Early Middle Ages. Britain and Ireland, c. 500-1100*, ed. by Pauline Stafford (Oxford, 2009), pp. 79-80.

⁴⁰⁸ Patrick Wormald, ‘The Age of Bede and Aethelbald’, in *The Anglo-Saxons*, ed. by Campbell (London 1982) p. 70.

here on the administration of the 'state'. In recent years, much has been written on the use of concepts as 'state' and 'nation' for the early medieval period. Medievalists who are concerned with political organization in the early Middle Ages have argued that one can use the concepts 'state' and 'nation' with regard to the early Middle Ages as long as the concepts are clearly defined. As a consequence, many have amended the commonly used definition once formulated by Max Weber.⁴⁰⁹ For late Anglo-Saxon England, Graham Campbell defined it as follows:

'Late Anglo-Saxon England was a nation state. It was an entity with an effective central authority, uniformly organised institutions, a national language, a national church, defined frontiers (admittedly with considerable fluidity in the north), and, above all, a strong sense of national identity.'⁴¹⁰

Patrick Wormald has argued along the same lines as Campbell.⁴¹¹ In general, we can conclude that we may speak of an Anglo-Saxon state in late Anglo-Saxon England, i.e. when the Kingdom of England came into being, if we are clear about the definition used.

The nation state of Late Anglo-Saxon England utilized 'uniformly organised institutions', according to Campbell.⁴¹² Several theorists of the early medieval state have also addressed the question of the administration of such states. The historian Walter Pohl has created a list of

⁴⁰⁹ Hans Werner Goetz, 'Die Wahrnehmung von Staat und Herrschaft im frühen Mittelalter' in: Stuart Airlie, Helmut Reimitz and Walter Pohl (ed.), *Staat im Frühen Mittelalter* (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11; Vienna 2006) pp. 39-58; Walter Pohl, 'Staat und Herrschaft im Frühmittelalter: Überlegungen zum Forschungsstand', in: Stuart Airlie, Helmut Reimitz and Walter Pohl (ed.), *Staat im Frühen Mittelalter* (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11; Vienna 2006) pp. 9-38; Susan Reynolds, 'There were States in Medieval Europe: A Response to Rees Davies' in: *Journal of Historical Sociology* (2003) vol. 16, no. 4, pp. 550-555; Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundzüge der verstehenden Soziologie* (Tübingen 1976); Patrick Wormald, 'Pre-modern State and Nation: Definite or indefinite?' in: Stuart Airlie, Helmut Reimitz and Walter Pohl (ed.), *Staat im Frühen Mittelalter* (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11; Vienna 2006) pp. 179-190.

⁴¹⁰ James Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State* (London, 2000), p. 10.

⁴¹¹ Wormald, 'Pre-modern State and Nation', pp. 179-190.

⁴¹² Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, p. 10.

criteria which, in his view, have to be met before one can consider an early medieval kingdom to be a state. One of these criteria is that in a kingdom there had to exist stable institutions, like bishoprics, monasteries, and a nobility, on which the state would depend and these institutions are, therefore, inferior to said state.⁴¹³ Mayke de Jong has argued, in line with other historians, most notably Janet L. Nelson, that the early medieval state was ‘built on the complementary duality of kings and bishops’, and that the bishops were among the primary councillors of a king in the early Middle Ages.⁴¹⁴ This is in line with the ideas of Pohl, in which the state rested on a bureaucracy. The theorists of early medieval state-building all agree that states developed a bureaucracy based on the church and nobility.

While Campbell and Wormald agree that only in late Anglo-Saxon times one can speak of a ‘state’, the institutions supporting this did not magically come into being at the very moment one might speak of a ‘state’. These institutions emerged in the centuries after the Romans had disappeared, when the church took over many of the administrative centres.⁴¹⁵ Campbell points to the existence of the shire-reeve and the hundredal system which were the basis of the states’ administration. These came into being at the end of the ninth and early tenth century.⁴¹⁶ Besides these systems of administrations, we may suppose that the kingdoms were supported by the church as well.⁴¹⁷

Cooperation of persons or institutions, such as the church, could be in a sense bought through the granting of lands. In fact, one of the most important aspects of kingship was the

⁴¹³ Pohl, ‘Staat und Herrschaft’, p. 37.

⁴¹⁴ Mayke de Jong, ‘*Ecclesia and the early medieval polity*’ in: Stuart Airlie, Helmut Reimitz and Walter Pohl (ed.), *Staat im Frühen Mittelalter* (Forschungen zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 11; Vienna 2006) p. 131.

⁴¹⁵ Innes, *Introduction to Early Medieval Western Europe*, pp. 335, 353; Julia M. H. Smith, *Europe After Rome. A New Cultural History 500-1000* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 220, 252.

⁴¹⁶ Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, pp. 15-17; Henry R. Lyon, *Societies and Peoples: Studies in the History of England and Wales, c. 600-1200* (London, 1992), pp. 111-134.

⁴¹⁷ Sarah Foot, *Æthelstan, the First King of England* (London, 2011), pp. 95-99.

rewarding of companions. A warrior who had fought for his lord could expect to be rewarded in treasure or land. As already discussed in chapter four,⁴¹⁸ there were two different types of land: loanland (*laenland*) was granted for a lifetime to a person, while bookland was given indefinitely, free from royal service (which consisted of the providing of food-rent, bridge building and military service), and the gift was documented in a charter. The owner of bookland was entitled to the food-rents associated with the land. The latter form of land was needed by churches to support themselves. The king often granted bookland to churches and monasteries, though it could also be bought.⁴¹⁹ Important to note here is that the king ‘awarded’ churches with land; it is likely that kings, through these measures, engaged in close connections with the church. The grant of Athelstan of the land of Amounderness to the church of St Peter, discussed in the previous chapter, is a good example of this practice.⁴²⁰

Bonds between the church and kings have been examined and demonstrated for the church of Winchester and the Wessex royal house in the ninth and tenth century by Barbara A. E. Yorke. She even argued that it could be shown that one particular bishop, Swithun, was responsible for the urban development of the city during the reign of Æthelwulf, to whom the bishop was an advisor.⁴²¹ Christine Senecal has convincingly demonstrated how bishops in East Anglia acted as lords to freemen who sought protection. She advocates to view bishops ‘as part of the local aristocratic network’.⁴²² While not relating to Northumbria or York, the above

⁴¹⁸ See chapter 4, p. 82.

⁴¹⁹ Abels, *Lordship*, pp. 43-56; Blair, *The Church*, pp. 87, 89-90, 104; Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, pp. 236-237; Stenton, *Anglo-Saxon England*, pp. 306-307; Williams, *Kingship and Government* (London, 1999), p. 61.

⁴²⁰ See above, p. 83.

⁴²¹ Barbara Yorke, ‘The Bishops of Winchester, the Kings of Wessex, and the Development of Winchester in the Ninth and Tenth Centuries’, in *Anglo-Saxon History: Basic Readings*, ed. by David A. E. Pelteret (New York & London, 2000), pp. 107-117.

⁴²² Christine Senecal, ‘Bishops as Contenders for Power in Late Anglo-Saxon England: the Bishopric of East Anglia and the Regional Aristocracy’, in *Negotiating Secular and Ecclesiastical Power. Western Europe in the Central Middle Ages*, ed. by Arnoud-Jan A. Bijsterveld, Henk Teunis and Andrew Wareham (Turnhout, 1999) p. (continued...)

arguments do show that bishops could act as close advisors to kings and were able to utilize bonds of lordship.⁴²³ From the Anglian period we have evidence of close cooperation between a king of Northumbria and the archbishop of York, for the king, Eadberht, was brother to the archbishop, Egbert.⁴²⁴ Lastly, cooperation between king and bishop is suggested by the fact that one of the tasks of the bishops was the admonition of king and people. The bishops uttered their *admonitio* at assemblies and councils; this was viewed as an important right of the bishops and indispensable for the welfare of a Christian kingdom.⁴²⁵

In relation to kingdoms being supported by the church, the impact of the Vikings on the church of Northumbria should be briefly addressed. While the impact of the Viking invasions on the church is a matter of intense debate, it may reasonably be argued that in the first decades of the conquest, especially c. 870-930, the church suffered due to losing its treasures and, at times, its land.⁴²⁶ The problem is reconstructing the impact. It is not my purpose here to go into the details of this debate. What is important to note is that the archbishopric of York must have lost some of its treasures due to the coming of the Vikings and must have viewed their own existence threatened.⁴²⁷ It is important to remember, however, that the see did survive and found a way to co-exist with the new settlers. This was probably due to the relatively quick conversion

⁴²²(...continued)

95-103. John Blair asserts bishops as exercising lordship as well, see: Blair, *The Church*, p. 73.

⁴²³ Catherine Cubitt, 'The Institutional Church', 'The Institutional Church', in *A Companion to the Early Middle Ages. Britain and Ireland, c. 500-1100*, ed. by Pauline Stafford (Oxford, 2009), pp. 379-380.

⁴²⁴ *ASC*, 738, p. 12.

⁴²⁵ Mayke de Jong, *The Penitential State. Authority and Atonement in the Age of Louis the Pious, 814-840* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 112-147; Irene van Renswoude, *License to Speak. The Rhetoric of Free Speech in late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Utrecht, 2011), pp. 259-284.

⁴²⁶ Blair, *The Church*, pp. 291-295, 311-315, 320-323; H. R. Lyon, *The Vikings in Britain* (London, 1977), pp. 132-133; Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 237-242; Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, pp. 140-147. It is generally agreed that the impact did not leave the English church 'broken and defeated' as Margaret Deanesly claimed, see: Margaret Deanesly, *The Pre-Conquest Church of England* (London, 1961) p. 231, 249-250 (231).

⁴²⁷ Campbell and Blair assert that the pre-Viking Anglo-Saxon church must have been rich in treasure; Campbell refers specifically to the Northumbrian church. See: Blair, *The Church*, pp. 84, 135-141; Campbell, *The Anglo-Saxon State*, pp. 87-88.

of the new settlers.⁴²⁸ An important point, however, is Wulfhere's cooperation with the invaders, which may suggest that the archbishopric's see in York may have suffered less in comparison to other churches.

In this chapter we have shone a light on several aspects of Anglo-Saxon England in order to come to a better understanding of the relations between the archbishops of York and the Viking kings. Here, I want to present a brief 'model' of the society in whose light the analysis of the next chapter should be considered.

First, Anglo-Saxon England was a collection of kingdoms which vied for supremacy. At times, an overlordship of a single kingdom may have been recognised, forcing the inferior kingdoms into paying tribute and supplying military service while maintaining their independence. Only after the Viking Age would this change with the prominence of Wessex over all England. The Viking kingdom of York must, however, still be considered in the light of the vying for supremacy of different kingdoms.

A very important aspect of my final argument in the following chapter is that Anglo-Saxon England, as indeed the whole of early medieval Europe, was characterized by personal bonds, be they kin-, friend-, or lordship, which dominated life in the early Middle Ages. Kings used bonds of lordship to attract a loyal following which they could utilize to govern their realm. Bishops were part of this aristocratic network. It is important to remember that in the early Middle Ages there was no clear-cut division of church and state; as described above, the state depended on the church and vice versa. The granting of land by kings to churches could be part

⁴²⁸ I am aware of the arrogance of this statement. However, this is not the place to go into the details of the discussion on this topic.; most scholars agree that conversion of the Danish settlers, excluding kings, must have occurred quickly after they settled. See: Roesdahl, *The Vikings*, p. 248-249; Rollason, *Northumbria*, pp. 237-243; Sawyer, *The Viking Age*, pp. 173, 212. Cf: Lesley Abrams, 'The Conversion of the Danelaw', in *Vikings and the Danelaw. Select Papers from the Thirteenth Viking Congress, Nottingham and York, 21-30 August 1997*, ed. by James Graham-Campbell and others (Oxford, 2001), pp. 31-44.

of the development of administration; kings may have expected services in return for land. In administrative functions of the church one may think especially of written administration, for the clergy were the specialists of the art of writing. Law and charter-making may have depended largely on the church. Churches also collected certain taxes, church dues, not for the state but for the church itself.⁴²⁹ It is hard to imagine this as a result of something other than a privilege granted by a king. As modern people, we must be aware of our inherent idea of separation of church and state which was not a reality in the early Middle Ages. Through the bonds of lordship, God's personnel could be in the service of the king as well.

⁴²⁹ Whitelock, *The Beginnings*, pp. 165-167; Whitelock, *English Historical Documents*, pp. 77-79.

Chapter Six: Moving beyond a Historiographical Stalemate

In this chapter I will draw the different threads of this thesis together. So far we have considered the later traditions of Jorvik in both Scandinavian and Anglo-Norman sources. We have considered the contemporary evidence and what it reveals about what was actually going on. In this chapter I will address the central theme of this thesis, namely how the enigma of York came to be, and I will put forward a hypothesis of my own regarding who ruled from Jorvik.

Origins of the Enigma

In the introduction, various viewpoints on the political situation in Viking age York have been sketched. The most important scholars of the debate were Alfred P. Smyth, N. J. Higham, and David Rollason. The two extreme views were that either the kings ruled, as argued by Higham, or that the archbishops ruled akin to later prince-bishops, as argued by Rollason. Alfred P. Smyth must be placed somewhere in the middle between these two, though slightly more to the side of Higham, for Smyth argued for deterministic Viking kings set on conquest; the archbishops were simply figures exploited by the kings.⁴³⁰

After the extensive survey in this thesis of the later traditions surrounding Jorvik and the actual evidence for ruling from the city, the historiographical debate can be much better understood. Even the traditions of Viking age York, shortly after it had ceased to exist, show contradictory elements, which are fully brought out in the story of the capture of York. The Scandinavians remembered the conquest of the city within a narrative focussed on a feud. The conquest was the result of the killing of King Ragnar Lothbrok by King Ælla; for that reason,

⁴³⁰ See chapter 1, pp. 5-14.

they portrayed the conquest of Northumbria as a rightful course of action by the sons of Ragnar. It is clear that this story came into being as an explanation for the coming of the Danes to Northumbria, and also provided precedence for the new conquerors of the eleventh century - if it is accepted the story originated in the Danelaw at that time. The latter is a convincing solution, for the Danes living in England seem to have been the only people who had a reason to invent such a tradition.⁴³¹

The other narrative on the capture of York, by the Anglo-Norman Geffrei Gaimar, provides a completely different account. Similar to the Scandinavian tradition, he gave an explanation for the coming of the Danes, but he sought the culprit in a different theatre. The Danes came to York through an invitation from the earl Buern, whose wife had been raped by the king of York, Osberht. With this, the blame is laid at Osberht's feet. Surprisingly, Ælla is not considered an illegitimate king in this account, as he is in all the other sources. Ælla does feature, fighting for York after Osberht had been killed. Whether there is any truth to this story is not our concern, even though it seems to fit so perfectly with the two captures of the city as deduced from the contemporary sources; however, that may be precisely how the story came to be in the first place.⁴³²

Clearly, confusion about Viking age York is not limited to present-day historians; already in the thirteenth century there existed conflicting traditions relating to a single event. The later sources reveal that the post-Viking age populace of England remembered little of Viking age York except of its beginnings; similarly, the Scandinavians seem to have had no reason to preserve stories of the Viking kings of York. Eric Bloodaxe does feature in the sagas, but as king of Norway who happened to reign for a short period from York. Based on the fact that certain

⁴³¹ See chapter 2, pp. 16-39.

⁴³² See chapter 3, pp. 40-62.

traditions were written down, we may suppose that many traditions must have been lost due to the simple fact that these were not preserved. That so few traditions have come down to us is because Viking age York no longer had any relevance for later historians preserving Anglo-Saxon history.

Likewise, from the contemporary evidence it is very difficult to come to an understanding of the political situation at York during the Viking age. As seen in chapter four, the evidence for ruling from York is scarce. The surviving coinage most strongly suggests that the Viking kings controlled York. Given the relatively large coinage from the city this contrasts sharply with the other forms of evidence. The St Peter coinage has added to the confusion, for it is unclear who was responsible for the minting of these coins.⁴³³

Given the confused state of the evidence, it is not surprising that historians have provided different interpretations. It has generally been assumed that the Viking kings were the ruling figures in the kingdom. In my opinion, this is a result of our tendency to view the kings as the figures enjoying the highest authority. David Rollason has opened up the discussion by questioning this assumption, providing an alternative hypothesis of the archbishops ruling the city. However, as must be clear now, either hypothesis is based on very slim evidence. It is now to put forward an alternative theory.

An alternative solution

My argument for the political organization of Jorvik centres around bonds of lordship and the relation between the Viking kings and the archbishops. I propose the hypothesis that the Vikings worked with archbishops and the local aristocracy to administer the city of York, which was the

⁴³³ See chapter 4, pp. 63-107.

most important city for the Viking kings in England and, at times, their base of operations. There are multiple indications that the Northumbrians would have preferred the Vikings above the kings of Wessex, who, after all, had never been their masters. It must be noted that there may have been a shift in power during our period, with the archbishops possibly having enjoyed relatively greater power and freedom up to 920, after which the kings asserted themselves to a greater extent. I will now set out my argument in detail, which will mainly be based on the coinage, for this is the most solid evidence available.

In chapter four, we proposed several possible conclusions about the numismatic evidence. What became clear was that from c. 920 onwards the coinage suggests a stronger influence over the mint by the kings, for from then on there was continuous minting in the city of York of coins bearing the names of the kings. It does not automatically follow that the kings were responsible for minting these, but it does show that they were accepted as valid authority figures. Pre-920, from c. 895 onward, there are several issues bearing the names of the kings (Guthfrith, Siefred, and Cnut) in combination with a cross symbol, but the coinage is dominated by the St Peter coins. The question of who minted these is difficult, and two possible answers have been given: the archbishops, or Frankish moneyers on behalf of the kings (the latter possibly being suggested by Continental influence on the designs). The use of Frankish moneyers by the Viking kings may only be valid for the coins bearing the names of kings, for why would a king mint anonymous coins, such as the St Peter coinage? The dominance of the anonymous St Peter coinage thus shows lack of royal control from c. 905- c. 920. Given the fact that the coins were minted bearing the name of the saint of the Minster, I would argue that the mint was controlled by the clergy in the city, presumably headed by the archbishops.

Previously, I have raised three possible explanations for the introduction of secular

symbols, often associated with paganism, on the coins from c. 920 onwards.⁴³⁴ The first supposed it was a result of cultural exchange; the second explanation ventured that it may have been a way of affirming a northern identity, while the third suggested aristocratic control of the mint. On the question of who minted these coins, David Rollason argued that the archbishops still maintained their control of the mint, but that they lost some influence and therefore had to compromise on the design of the coins, hence the introduction of the secular symbols.⁴³⁵ I find this an unsatisfying explanation. If we accept that the archbishops were responsible for minting until at least 920, it was either they who introduced the secular symbols, or the activity of minting was taken over by another party. However, as already suggested, I would like to do away with the designation of Thor's hammer and the sword as 'pagan'. Rather, I would like to view them as symbols associated with the north and label them secular, similar to the sculpture which showed symbols associated with 'paganism' in combination with Christian elements as well.⁴³⁶ Whoever minted these coins considered the inclusion of these symbols as logical and valid. It seems likely to me that this was due to a process of interculturalism. While the aristocracy may have played a role in this development, it is also entirely possible that the archbishops remained in control of the mint.

The St Peter coinage ended with the reign of King Athelstan. This may have been a direct result of Athelstan's rule, for his coins terminate the use of secular symbols as well, suggesting a break with the minting traditions of York. The reason for this may be that King Athelstan tried to get the coinage of Northumbria in line with that of Wessex. The end of the St Peter coinage does not necessarily mean that the archbishops lost their control of the mint. There is a clear

⁴³⁴ See chapter 4, pp. 95-97.

⁴³⁵ See chapter 4, p. 96, n. 358.

⁴³⁶ See chapter 4, pp. 95, n. 356.

indication that King Athelstan tried, and for all we know succeeded, to gain the cooperation of the Church of York, considering his grant of Amounderness of c. 934 to St Peter.

On the coinage, one last thing might be suggested. In the previous chapter, I have asserted that the archbishops were part of the aristocratic network and utilized personal bonds in a manner similar to kings and aristocrats. The whole question of who controlled the mint must be viewed in this light: the archbishops were not the ones who minted, they 'employed' moneyers to do this, similar to kings. If one accepts this argument, we can discern a production tier from king to moneyer, all tied together by personal bonds. The question of the decoration of the coins is therefore even more complicated, for which level of the pyramid controlled the design? Considered in this way, there is no reason that the introduction of new symbols meant the termination of the archbishop's control.

Besides the numismatic evidence, there are small scraps of evidence for the importance of the archbishops to the Viking kings. These derive primarily from what is known of Wulfhere and Wulfstan, at the start and the end of our period. Wulfhere may have come to an understanding with the new conquerors, securing his position in a troubled time. Wulfstan, on the other hand, seems to have cooperated very consciously with the Viking kings versus the encroachment of Wessex on Northumbria.

The latter events must be understood in the context of the competition between different kingdoms, described in the previous chapter. Where the conquest of York clearly was a traumatic experience, there may not have been that great a break between Anglian and Viking age Northumbria. The rule of the kingdom changed hands, but the Vikings simply took a role on a stage which had changed little during the past decades. True, these Scandinavians spoke a

different language, but we hardly know how difficult it was to understand this new tongue.⁴³⁷ True, the Vikings were pagan at first, but this featured mostly in the narrative of the Chronicles and of clergymen who saw the Vikings as their enemies, for they could portray them as such and thus give their struggle against them a greater meaning within a Christian context. There is no reason to attribute to the Viking kings of York some elaborate scheme to take over all of England, as Smyth and Downham would have it.⁴³⁸ While their narrative is attractive, explaining many of the events of the period, there is no evidence from the sources to support such a view. The cooperation of the archbishops suggests they viewed the new kingdom as valid. Therefore the new Viking kingdom must be viewed in a similar way as the preceding kingdom of Northumbria, especially when it comes to its interaction with the other kingdoms of Britain.

The careers of Wulfhere and Wulfstan are not the only evidence for cooperation. Even when taking into account the late date of the tradition about Guthfrith and the community of St Cuthbert, there does seem to have been cooperation between these two parties, for the community could wander the countryside in relatively safety from plunder, if the sources are to be believed. It seems to me that the later tradition came into existence to hide the more practical cooperation of the community with the Vikings, portraying it as orchestrated by a saint and giving it important Christian elements - in a sense a cover-up.

One might raise the objection of religion against my argument. Why would pagan kings choose to work with Christians, or, rather, the other way around? David Rollason argued, based on the supposed religion of the Viking kings, that they could not have been responsible for the minting of coins with cross symbols on them. The problem, however, is that we have no evidence for the religion of the kings, except for Guthfrith who was buried in York Minster. There is a

⁴³⁷ Peter Sawyer has suggested we must view Anglo-Scandinavian society as bilingual, see: Sawyer, *The Age of the Vikings*, p. 173.

⁴³⁸ See chapter 1, pp. 6-8.

scholarly consensus that the Scandinavian settlers converted to Christianity rather quickly;⁴³⁹ it seems to me that there is no reason to suppose that the kings would stubbornly advocate paganism when their people were Christian. The Vikings were flexible in their ways. We have seen how Olaf and Rægnald were baptized by King Edmund in 943; there is the famous example of the baptism of Guthrum as part of the treaty with King Alfred. There is no reason to suppose similar political, or practical, conversions did not take place in Northumbria.

In conclusion, I have argued for a control of daily business in the city of York by the archbishops in the name of the Viking kings, or the Wessex kings when these ruled. Admittedly, this argument is based on very slim evidence. The idea is that the Viking kings utilized an administrative system already in place when they came to York. From the Anglian period, there is evidence the archbishops minted coins, and why would they not continue to do so in the Viking age? Furthermore, a trading city of this importance must have had a need for regular coinage, which appeared from c. 895 onwards. We do witness a shift in our period, as mentioned earlier; the authority of the kings must have grown from c. 920 onwards, for from then onwards no anonymous issues were minted any longer. One may therefore argue that coinage was initiated by the archbishops or the elite of York - of which the archbishop was part - as a response to growing demand, while the Viking kings got involved on a regular basis from 920 onwards.

⁴³⁹ See chapter 5, p. 116, n. 416.

Chapter 7: Conclusion - The Enigma in Context

In this thesis the enigma of Anglo-Scandinavian York has been examined by focussing on two main themes. The first of these was the exploration of how the Viking kingdom of York, and more specifically its rulers, were remembered in later sources. The aim here was not only to evaluate the sources, but also to get a glimpse on how the remarkable era of Scandinavian rule came to be remembered, and how later traditions may have taken the form they did. The second theme was to consider what the contemporary sources reveal of the rulers of the city. Here, the aim was to be able to provide the reader with a clear hypothesis about who ruled the city and in what manner. Throughout the thesis we have moved chronologically and geographically backwards through the available material. We started in the introduction with a consideration of the historiographical debate, which inspired the starting point of this thesis. The historiography is confused, and there are two competing hypotheses on the political situation in Jorvik. On the one hand there is the notion that the Vikings must have ruled independently with efficiency and sophistication, while on the other hand we have the view of David Rollason, who argued that the archbishops ruled the city like prince-bishops utilizing the Vikings for their own means. In order to explore the historiographical debate it proved illuminating to consider the later traditions as well as the contemporary evidence to see how perceptions and memories of this enigmatic phase in York's history were transmitted in different contexts.

In the second chapter, we discussed and analysed the main later Scandinavian traditions on Anglo-Scandinavian York. Strikingly few clear data have made it into these later sources, but there is no reason to suppose that traditions were non-existent. With the concept of social memory in mind, the fact that scant clear information is available in the later Scandinavian sources shows it was not relevant to the current needs of the audience of these sources. The third

chapter, on traditions conserved in Anglo-Norman sources, argued a similar case. The later Anglo-Norman historians based their works mainly on the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle. Though there is evidence of surviving traditions on Anglo-Scandinavian York at the time of these works, which Gaimar's story on the capture of York possibly testifies to, these authors chose not to include these traditions. The reason for the omission of these stories seems to reflect similar dynamics to the case of the Scandinavian sources. For both the Anglo-Norman and Scandinavian authors, Anglo-Scandinavian York had lost its relevance. Because these sources were not written at York, nor were they written down during the Scandinavian era of the city, no one had a need or reason to celebrate the Scandinavian era at York.

In the fourth chapter we considered the contemporary evidence for ruling from York. The most revealing and abundant evidence consisted of coins minted in the city. While the survival rate of other sources is smaller, I argued this would mainly be due to the loss of sources rather than to an absence of any effective governance. In chapter five, I have set out several threads which featured in my hypothesis which I put forward in chapter six. Of the different characteristics discussed in chapter five - personal bonds in early medieval society, the competition of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, as well as the organization of these kingdoms - the role of personal bonds was the most important one, proving a central feature of the other characteristics as well.

In chapter six, first we considered why the historians have put forward such divergent views on the political rulers of York. In view of the limited evidence, the contrasting interpretations are not surprising. The contemporary evidence is very difficult to interpret, for the different sources suggest varying degrees of political control of the kings: where the numismatic evidence conveys the impression of a well organized kingdom, the other sources, where they exist, do not necessarily support such a view. This is why the historiographical debate could split

the way it did.

After the discussion of the origins of the historiographical debate, I put forward my own hypothesis. The personal bonds of the early Middle Ages are the most important. In chapter six I argued that the archbishops controlled the mint and exercised considerable practical control over the city as subordinates to the Viking king: there existed a division of tasks and responsibilities between these two parties. This was possible if one views these relationships in light of personal bonds; there are several indications in the contemporary sources that the Viking kings were willing to cooperate with the Christian church of Northumbria. They utilized the bonds of lordship, providing the church with protection and possibly resources, for which the church in turn would administer, in our case, the city of York.

In relation to the existing notions on the rulers of York, the main innovation of my hypothesis is to leave behind the notion of a single ruler and to understand the political alliances within the context of early medieval society. While it is very convenient, and in line with modern examples of rule, to argue for a single person or institution controlling a polity, the reality of the early Middle Ages is seldom that simple. It is important to view such problems within a wider context. The Vikings delegated certain activities of ruling to the archbishops. At the same time, the Viking kings and the archbishops ruled with the local consent of a population that was a mixture of Scandinavians and Anglo-Saxons. Ruling must be understood in connection with these three parties. With my hypothesis it is possible to move beyond the historiographical stalemate discussed in the introduction. While both Smyth's and Rollason's argument have merit, I think that I have adequately shown, through consideration of all the sources and considering rulership in a wider context, there is a more elegant solution to the problem of who ruled Jorvik.

If one accepts my hypothesis on the ruling of York, it would be worthwhile to consider it in a wider context, moving beyond York. If the Viking kings were willing to cooperate with

the archbishops at York, they may have entertained similar bonds with other communities. We have seen in this thesis an example of such a bond. King Guthfrith granted lands to the community of St Cuthbert who in turn may have supported his kingship and controlled the northern part of Northumbria. There is no reason to suppose that the Vikings did not follow up on this practice. It might also prove worthwhile to examine other areas in Europe where Vikings were an important factor, such as Ireland and Francia.

Similarly, in a more general fashion, it might prove valuable to consider other Christian communities in the early medieval period in the light of what I have argued here. There is no reason to suppose that the Viking kings of York were innovative in utilizing bonds to administer the city. Political history is at times still portrayed in a simple dichotomy of kings versus everyone else. It is worthwhile to consider the question of ruling as done in this thesis, to view it in a wider context of networks of different parties.

Thus ends this thesis, in which we analysed the later traditions on the rulers of Jorvik as well as the contemporary evidence for such rulers. I have tried to expose the problems of Anglo-Scandinavian York in the light of all the relevant sources instead of focussing on one aspect only. I have argued that the archbishops ruled the city, not as prince-bishops utilizing the military power of the Vikings, but in tandem with the Viking kings. It is my hope, that through this thesis we have come to a fuller and better understanding of the enigma that is Anglo-Scandinavian York.

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Appendix I: Chronology

Here follows a list of dates of the different kings of York during its Scandinavian era. A list of the archbishops is provided as well.

Kings⁴⁴⁰

Osberht	848 or 849; expelled 862 or 863
Ælle	862 or 863; <i>d.</i> 21 or 23 March 867
Osberht (again)	867; <i>d.</i> 21 or 23 March 867
Ecgberht I	867; expelled 872; <i>d.</i> 873
Ricsige	873; <i>d.</i> 876
Ecgberht II	876; <i>d.</i> ?878
<i>Rulers of the Scandinavian Kingdom of York</i>	
Halfdan I	875/6; driven out 877
Guthfrith	883; <i>d.</i> 24 Aug.? 895
Sigfrith (Sievert, Sigfred, Siefred)	895-
Cnut	895-
Æthelwold	899; <i>d.</i> ? 902
Cnut	?901-
Halfdan II	<i>d.</i> 910
Eowils	<i>d.</i> 910
Ivarr ⁴⁴¹	<i>d.</i> 910
Ragnald I	914 or earlier; <i>d.</i> 920
Sihtric Coach	920/1; <i>d.</i> 927
Olaf I Cuaran	? 927
Guthfrith II	927; driven out 927; <i>d.</i> 934
Athelstan, k. of English	927-939
Olaf II Guthfrithson	939; <i>d.</i> 941
Olaf Cuaran (again)	941; driven out 944
Ragnald II Guthfrithson	943; driven out 944
Edmund, k. of English	944-946
Eadred, k. of English	946-947
Eric Bloodaxe	947; deserted by supporters 948
Eadred, k. of English	948-950
Olaf I Cuaran (again)	949/50; driven out 952
Eric Bloodaxe (second reign)	952; driven out 954; <i>d.</i> 954

Archbishop of York⁴⁴²

Wulfhere	854-892
Æthelbald	900-904/928
Hrothweard	904/928-930/931
Wulfstan	930/931-955/956

⁴⁴⁰ Dates are taken from: C. R. Cheney (ed), *A Handbook of Dates for Students of British History* (revised edition; Cambridge, 2000), pp. 25-26.

⁴⁴¹ Own addition, based on mention of him in Æthelweard's *Chronicon*; see chapter two, p. 107, no. 29.

⁴⁴² Dates taken from: Rollason, *Sources*, pp. 69-70.

Appendix II: Comparison table contemporary and Anglo-Norman sources

In this appendix I have set out a table in which the information of annals from the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle is compared to annals of later sources. The later sources in question are the *Annals of St Neots*, the *Chronicon Æthelwardi*, Asser's *De rebus gestis Ælfredi*, the *Historia regum* I and II, Symeon's *Libellus de exordio atque procursu istius hoc est Dunelmensis ecclesie*, John of Worcester's *Chronicon ex chronicis*, William of Malmesbury's *De gestis regum Anglorum libri quinque*, Geffrei Gaimar's *L'Estoire des Engleis*, Roger of Hoveden's *Chronica*, and Roger of Wendover's *Chronica siue flores historiarum*. The contemporary sources are mainly included for coherence's sake, rather than for the analysis of chapter three for which this appendix was specifically composed.

First, I will provide a list with the annals of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which contain information relevant to the Viking kingdom of York. Then follows a table follows with on the far left the year number of the relevant annal; the other columns contain either a statement that the contents are more or less same, or the added content is narrated, or the difference is noted. The relevant bibliographical information will be given after the table and per annal.

Anglo-Saxon Chronicle entries:

Here follows a list of entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which relate either to York, the Viking kings reigning from the city, or the archbishops.

867 In this year the army went from East Anglia to Northumbria, across the Humber estuary to the city of York. And there was great civil strife going on in that people, and they had deposed their king Osbert and taken a king with no hereditary right, Ælla. And not until late in the year did they unite sufficiently to proceed to fight the raiding army; and nevertheless they collected a large army and attacked the enemy in York, and broke into the city; and some of them got inside, and an immense slaughter was made of the Northumbrians, some inside and some outside, and both kings were killed, and the survivors made peace with the enemy.⁴⁴³

*N. .dcccclxvii. Her for se here of Eastænglum ofer Humbre muðan to Eoforwicceastre on Norðanhymbre, 7 þær wæs mycel ungeþwærnys þære þeode betwux him sylfum, 7 hi hæfdon heora cyning aworpenne Osbryht 7 ungecyndne cyning underfengon Ællan, 7 hi late on geare to þan gecyrdon þæt hi wið þone here winnende wæron, 7 hi þeah mycle fyrd gegadredon, 7 þone here sohton æt Eoforwicceastre 7 þa ceastre bræcon, 7 hi sume inne wurdon, 7 þær wæs ungemetlic wæl geslægen Norðanhymbra, sume binnan, sume butan, 7 þa cyningas begen ofslægene, 7 seo laf wið þone here friðd nam.*⁴⁴⁴

869 In this year the raiding army returned to the city of York, and stayed there one year.⁴⁴⁵

*N. .dcccclxix. Her for se here eft to Eoforwicceastre 7 þær sæt an gear.*⁴⁴⁶

873 In this year the army went into Northumbria, and it took up winter quarters at Torksey.⁴⁴⁷

*N. .dcccclxxiii. Her nam se here wintersetl æt Turcesige.*⁴⁴⁸

⁴⁴³ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 45.

⁴⁴⁴ ASC 867, in *Ms D*, p. 24.

⁴⁴⁵ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 47.

⁴⁴⁶ ASC 869, in *MS D*, p. 24.

⁴⁴⁷ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 48

⁴⁴⁸ ASC 873, in *MS D*, p. 26.

875 In this year the army left Repton: Healfdene went with part of the army into Northumbria and took up winter quarters by the River Tyne. And the army conquered the land and often ravaged among the Picts and the Strathclyde Britons; (...).⁴⁴⁹

*N. .dcccclxxv. Her for se here fram Hreopedune, 7 Healfdene for mid sumum þam here on Norðhymbre 7 nam wintersetl be Tinan þære ea, 7 se here þæt land geode 7 oft gehergode on Pehtas 7 on Strætled Wealas, (...).*⁴⁵⁰

876 And that year Healfdene shared out the land of the Northumbrians, and they proceeded to plough and to support themselves.⁴⁵¹

*N. .dcccclxxvi. (...) 7 þy geare Halfdene Norðhymbraland gedælde, 7 ergende wæron, 7 heora tilgende wæron.*⁴⁵²

893 (894 D) In this year, (...), the Northumbrians and East Angles had given King Alfred oaths (...); and yet, contrary to those pledges, as often as the other Danish armies went out in full force, they went either with them or on their behalf. (...) [The rest of the annal gives an elaborate account of the campaigns of Alfred against the *here*; what is important to note here is that it is said that the Northumbrians, together with the East Anglians, reinforced the Danish *here* on three different occasions in that year].⁴⁵³

*N. .dcccxciii. On þysson geare, (...) hæfdon Norðanhymbre 7 Eastængle Ælfrede cyninge aþas geseald, (...); 7 þeah ofer þa treowa, swa oft swa þa oðre hergas mid ealle herge ut foron, þonne foron hi, oþþe mid, oððe on hyra healfa. (...).*⁴⁵⁴

900 (901 in D) [After death Alfred is related] Then the atheling Æthelwold, his father's brother's son [i.e. son of king Ethelred, elder brother of Alfred], rode and seized the residence at Wimborne and at *Twinham*, against the will of the king and his councillors. Then the king rode with the army till he encamped at Badbury near Wimborne, and Æthelwold stayed inside the

⁴⁴⁹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 48.

⁴⁵⁰ *ASC* 875, in *MS D*, p. 26.

⁴⁵¹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 48.

⁴⁵² *ASC* 876, in *MS D*, p. 26.

⁴⁵³ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 56-58.

⁴⁵⁴ *ASC* 894, in *MS D*, pp. 31-33.

residence with the men who had given allegiance to him; and he had barricaded all the gates against him, and said that he would either live there or die there. Then meanwhile the atheling rode away by night, and went to the Danish army in Northumbria, and they accepted him as king and gave allegiance to him.⁴⁵⁵

*N. .dcccii. (...) 7 þa gerad Æþelwold æðeling his fæderan sunu þone ham æt Winburnan, 7 æt Tweoxnam, þæs cynges unþances 7 his witena. Ða rad se cyning mid fyrde oððe he gewicode æt Baddanbyrig wið Winburnan, 7 Aþelwold sæt binnan þam hame mid þam mannum þe him to gebugon, 7 he hæfde ealle þa gatu forworhte in to him, 7 sæde þæt he wolde oppe ðær libban oððe þær licgean. Ða under þam þa rad se æþeling on niht aweg, 7 gesohte þone here on Norðhymbrum, 7 hi hine underfengon him to cyninge, 7 him to bugon. (...).*⁴⁵⁶

902 (904 in D) In this year Æthelwold came, with all the fleet which he could procure and which was subject to him, to Essex.⁴⁵⁷

*N. .dccciiii. Her com Aðelwold hider ofer sæ mid eallum þam flotan þe he begitan mihte, 7 him to gebogen wæs on Eastseaxe.*⁴⁵⁸

903 (905 in D) In this year Æthelwold induced the army in East Anglia to break the peace (...) [after clash with king Edward in the battle of the Holme]. And on the Danish side King Ehoric [i.e. king of East Anglia] was killed, and the atheling Æthelwold, whom they had chosen as their king (...).⁴⁵⁹

*N. .dcccv. Her gelædde Aþelwold þone here on Eastenglum to unfriðe (...). 7 on þæra Deniscena healfe wæs ofslægen Eoric cyning, 7 Aþelwold æþeling, þe hi him to cyninge gecurun, (...).*⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁵ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 58-59.

⁴⁵⁶ ASC 901, in *MS D*, p. 36.

⁴⁵⁷ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 59.

⁴⁵⁸ ASC 904, in *MS D*, p. 36.

⁴⁵⁹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 60.

⁴⁶⁰ ASC 905, in *MS D*, pp. 36-37.

906 And that same year the peace was established at Tiddingford, just as King Edward decreed, both with the East Angles and the Northumbrians [E claims that this was done out of necessity].⁴⁶¹

*N. .dcccvi. (...) 7 on þam ylcan geare man gefæstnode þone frið æt Ytingaforda, swa swa Eadward cyning gerædde, ægþær ge wið Eastænglum ge wið Norðhymbrae.*⁴⁶²

*E: AN.dcccvi. Her gefestnode Eadward cyng for neode frið ægðer ge wið Eastengla here ge wið Norðhymbre.*⁴⁶³

910 (911 in D) In this year the army in Northumbria broke the peace, and scorned every privilege that King Edward and his councillors offered them, and ravaged Mercia. (...) [After the battle which the Danes lost:] And there were killed King Eowils and King Healfdene, and (...) [rest are earls].⁴⁶⁴

*N. .dcccxi. Her bræc se here þone frið on Norðhymbrum, 7 forsawon ælc riht þe Eadward cyning 7 his witan him budon, 7 hergodon ofer Myrcland. (...) 7 þær wæs Eowilisc cyng ofslægen, 7 Healden cyng, 7 (...).*⁴⁶⁵

923 [true date 919] In this year King Ragnald won York.⁴⁶⁶

*N. .dcccxxi. Her Regnold cyning gewan Eoforwic.*⁴⁶⁷

920 (A) And then the king of the Scots and all the people of the Scots, and Ragnald, and the sons of Eadwulf and all who live in Northumbria, both English and Danish, Norsemen and others, and also the king of the Strathclyde Welsh and all the Strathclyde Welsh, chose him as father and lord.

⁴⁶¹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 60.

⁴⁶² *ASC* 906, in *MS D*, p. 37.

⁴⁶³ *ASC E*, 906, in *MS E*, p. 54.

⁴⁶⁴ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 61-62.

⁴⁶⁵ *ASC* 911, in *MS D*, p. 38.

⁴⁶⁶ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 68.

⁴⁶⁷ *ASC* 923, in *MS D*, p. 41.

(...)7 hine geces þa to fæader 7 to hlaforde Scotta cyning 7 eall Scotta þeod, 7 Rægnald 7 Eadulfes suna 7 ealle þa þe on Norþhymbrum bugeaþ, ægþer ge Engliſce ge Deniſce ge Norþmen ge oþre, 7 eac Stræcledweala cyning 7 ealla Stræcledwealas.⁴⁶⁸ (69)

926 (925 in D) In this year King Athelstan and Sihtric, king of the Northumbrians, met together at Tamworth on 30 January and Athelstan gave him his sister in marriage.⁴⁶⁹

*N. .dccccxxv. Her Æþelstan cyning 7 Sihtric Norðhymbra cyng heo gesamnodon æt Tameweorðþige .iii. kalendas Februarius, 7 Æþelstan his sweostor him forgeaf.*⁴⁷⁰

927 (926 in D) In this year appeared fiery lights in the northern quarter of the sky, and Sihtric died, and King Athelstan succeeded to the kingdom of the Northumbrians; (...).⁴⁷¹

*N. .dccccxxvi. Her oðeowdon fyrena leoman on norðæle þære lyfte. 7 Sihtric acwæl, 7 Æþelstan cyning feng to Norðhymbra rice. (...).*⁴⁷²

927 (E) In this year King Athelstan drove out King Guthfrith.⁴⁷³

*AN.dccccxxvii. Her Æþelstan cyning fordraf Guðfrið cyng.*⁴⁷⁴ (55)

937 In this year King Athelstan, lord of nobles, dispenser of treasure to men, and his brother also, Edmund atheling, won by the sword's edge undying glory in battle round *Brunanburh*. (...) Their enemies perished; the people of the Scots and the pirates fell doomed. (...)

The whole day long the West Saxons with mounted companies kept in pursuit of the hostile peoples, grievously they cutdown the fugitives from behind with their whetted swords. The Mercians refused not hard conflict to any men who with Olaf had sought this land in the bosom of a ship over the tumults of waters, coming doomed to the fight. Five young kings lay on that field of battle, slain by the swords, and also seven of Olaf's earls, and a countless host of seamen and Scots. There the prince of the Norsemen was put to flight, driven perforce to the

⁴⁶⁸ *ASC A 920*, in *MS A*, p. 69.

⁴⁶⁹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 68.

⁴⁷⁰ *ASC 925*, in *MS D*, p. 41.

⁴⁷¹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 68.

⁴⁷² *ASC 926*, in *MS D*, p. 41.

⁴⁷³ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 69.

⁴⁷⁴ *ASC E 927*, in *MS. E*, p. 55.

prow of his ship with a small company; (...)

Then the Norsemen, the sorry survivors from the spears, put out in their studded ships on to Ding's mere, to make for Dublin across the deep water, back to Ireland humbled at heart. (...)⁴⁷⁵

*N. .dccccxxvii. Her Æpelstan cyning, eorla drihten, beorna beahgifa, 7 his broþer eac, Eadmund æpeling, ealdorlangne tyr geslogon æt sweorda ecgum ymbe Brunanburh. (...) Heted crungon, Scotta leode 7 scipflotan fæge feollon. (...). Wesseaxe forð andlangne dæg eoredcystum on last lægdon, laþum ðeodum, heowan heora flyman hindan, þearle mecum mycel scearpum. Myrce ne wyrndon heardes handplegan, hæleþa nanum, þæra þe mid Anlafe ofer eargebland on lides bosme land gesohton, fage to feohte - fife lagon on þam campstede, cyningas iunga, sweordum aswefede, swylce seofene eac eorlas Anlafes, unrim herges flotan 7 Scotta - þær geflymed wearð Norðmanna brego, neade gebæded to lides stæfne lytle weorode. (...) Gewiton him þa Norðmen dæg gled on garum, dreorig dareða laf, on Dynigesmere ofer deopne wæter Dyflig secan, eft Yrland æwiscmode.*⁴⁷⁶

940 (941 in D) In this year the Northumbrians were false to their pledges, and chose Olaf from Ireland as their king.⁴⁷⁷

*N. .dccccli. Her Norðhymbra alugon hira getreowaða 7 Anlaf of Yrlande him to cinge gecuron.*⁴⁷⁸

942 The Danes were previously subjected by force under the Norsemen, for a long time in bonds of captivity to the heathens, until the defender of warriors, the son of Edward, King Edmund, redeemed them, to his glory.⁴⁷⁹

*N. .dccccli. (...) Dæne wæron æror under Norðmannum nyde gebæded on hæðenra hæfteclommum lange þrage, oð hy alysde eft for his weorðscipe wigendra hleo afora Eadweardes, Eadmundes cyning.*⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁵ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 69-70.

⁴⁷⁶ ASC 937, in *MS D*, pp. 42-43.

⁴⁷⁷ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 70.

⁴⁷⁸ ASC 941, in *MS D*, p. 43.

⁴⁷⁹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 71.

⁴⁸⁰ ASC 942, in *MS D*, p. 43.

942 E In this year King Olaf died.⁴⁸¹

*AN.dccccxlii. Her Anlaf cyning forðferde. [Et Ricardus uetus suscepit regnum et regnavit annos .liii..*⁴⁸²

940-943 (943 in D) In this year Olaf took Tamworth by storm, and the losses were heavy on both sides, and th Danes were victorious and took away much booty with them. Wulfrun was taken captive in tat raid. In this year King Edmund besieged King Olaf and Archbishop Wulfstan in Leicester, and he could have subdued them if they had not escaped by night from the borough. And after that Olaf secured King Edmund's friendship, and King Edmund stood sponsor to King Olaf at baptism and he bestowed gifts on him royally, and the same year, after a fairly big interval, he stood sponsor to King Ragnald at his confirmation.⁴⁸³

*N. .dccccxliii. Her Anlaf abræc Tamewurpe, 7 micel wæl gefeol on ægþra hand, 7 þa Denan sige ahton, 7 micle herehuþe mid him aweg læddon; þær wæs Wulfrun genumen on þære hergunge. Her Eadmund cyning ymbsæt Anlaf cyning 7 Wulfstan arcebiscop on Legraceastre, 7 ne hy gewyldan meahte, nære þæt hi on niht ut ne ætburston of þære byrig, 7 æfter þæm begeat Anlaf Eadmundes cynges freondscipe, 7 se cyning Eadmund onfeng þa Anlafe cyninge æt fulwihte 7 he him cynelice gyfode. 7 ðy ilcan geare, ymbe tæla mycelne fyrst, he onfeng Regnalde cyninge æt bisceopes handa.*⁴⁸⁴

944 In this year King Edmund reduced all Northumbria under his rule, and drove out two kings, Olaf, Sihtric's son, and Ragnald, Guthfrith's son.⁴⁸⁵

*N. .dccccxliv. Her Eadmund cyning geeode eall Norðhymbra land him to gewælde 7 aflymde twegen cyningas, Anlaf Sihtrices sunu, 7 Regnald Guðferþes sunu.*⁴⁸⁶

⁴⁸¹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 71.

⁴⁸² *ASC E 942*, in *MS E*, p. 55.

⁴⁸³ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 71. The annal as recounted here is slightly amended from Whitelock to present the 'D' version of the annal.

⁴⁸⁴ *ASC 943*, in *MS D*, pp. 43-44.

⁴⁸⁵ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 71.

⁴⁸⁶ *ASC 944*, in *MS D*, p. 44.

947 In this year King Eadred came to Tanshelf, and there Archbishop Wulfstan and all the councillors of the Northumbrians pledged themselves to the king, and within a short space they were false to it all, both pledge and oaths as well.⁴⁸⁷

*N. .dccccxlvii. Her com Eadred cyning to Taddenesscylfe, 7 þær Wulstan se arcebiscop 7 ealle Norðhymbra witan wið þone cyning hi getreowsodon, 7 binnan litlan fæce hit eall alugon, ge wed 7 eac aþas.*⁴⁸⁸

948 In this year King Eadred ravaged all Northumbria, because they had accepted Eric as their king; and in that ravaging the glorious minster at Ripon, which St. Wilfrid had built, was burnt down. And when the king was on his way home, the army [which] was in York overtook the king's army at Castleford, and they made a great slaughter there. Then the king became so angry that he wished to march back into the land and destroy it utterly. When the councillors of the Northumbrians understood that, they deserted Eric and paid to King Eadred compensation for their act.⁴⁸⁹

*N. .dccccxlviii. her Eadred cyning oferhergode eall Norðhymbra land, for þæm þe hi hæfdon genumen him Yryc to cyninge. 7 þa on þære hergunge wæs þæt mære mynster forbærnd æt Rypon þæt sancte Wilferð getimbrede. 7 þa se cyning hamweard wæs, þa offerde se here innan Heoforwic, wæs þæs cynges fyrde hindan æt Caesterforda, 7 þæt mycel wæ geslogon. Ða wearð se cyning swa gram þæt he wolde eft in fyrdian 7 þone eard mid ealle fordon. Ða Norðhymbra witan þæt ongeaton, þa forlæton hi Hyryc 7 wið Eadred cyning gebeton þa dæde.*⁴⁹⁰

949 E In this year Olaf Cwiran came into Northumbria.⁴⁹¹

*AN.dccccxlix. Her com Anlaf Cwiran on Norðhymbra land.*⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁷ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 72.

⁴⁸⁸ ASC 947, in *MS D*, p. 44.

⁴⁸⁹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, pp. 72-73.

⁴⁹⁰ ASC 948, in *MS D*, p. 44.

⁴⁹¹ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 73.

⁴⁹² ASC E 949, in *Ms E*, p. 55.

952 E In this year the Northumbrians drove out King Olaf, and received Eric, Harold's son.⁴⁹³
*AN.dcccclii. Her Norðhymbre fordrifan Anlaf cyning 7 underfengon Yric Haroldes sunu.*⁴⁹⁴

952 In this year King Eadred ordered Archbishop Wulfstan to be taken into the fortress of *Iudanbyrig*, because accusations had often been made to the king against him. (...) ⁴⁹⁵
*N. .dcccclii. Her on þyssum geare het Eadred cyning gebringan Wulstan arcebiscop in Iudanbyrig on þam fæstenne, for þæm he wæs oft to þam cyninge forwreged. (...).*⁴⁹⁶

954 In this year the Northumbrians drove out Eric, and Eadred succeeded to the kingdom of the Northumbrians. In this year Archbishop Wulfstan received a bishopric again, in Dorchester [this could also read: 'received back his bishopric at Dorchester'].⁴⁹⁷
*N. .dccccli. Her Norðhymbre fordrifon Yric, 7 Eadred feng to Norðhymbra rice. Her Wulstan arcebiscop onfeng eft biscroprices on Dorceceastre.*⁴⁹⁸

⁴⁹³ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 73.

⁴⁹⁴ *ASC E 952*, in *Ms E*, p. 55.

⁴⁹⁵ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 73.

⁴⁹⁶ *ASC 952*, in *MS D*, p. 45.

⁴⁹⁷ Whitelock, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, p. 73.

⁴⁹⁸ *ASC 954*, in *MS D*, p. 45.

Table of Comparison - (near)-contemporary sources

Year	Neots	Æthelweard	Asser	HR I
867	- civil strife is said to be punishment of God - adds that York did not yet have strong walls	- same	- civil strife is said to be punishment of God - adds that York did not yet had strong walls. - adds that the Northumbrian army is led by eight earls besides the two kings	- Viking's are said to have fled upon arrival army of the Northumbrians (presumably into the city).
869	- same	- same	- same	- adds that the Vikings ravaged
872				
873	- same	- same	- same	- same
875	- same	- adds that the Vikings ravaged	- same	- adds that the Vikings ravaged
876		- same	- same	
892			- Archbishop Wulfhere dies, in 39 th year of office	
893	- claims that York is taken by the Vikings, and that a bishop named 'Sebar' escapes. - account of King Alfred's campaign is shorter	- makes mention of Sigeferð, a pirate from Northumbria	- same	- contains only peace with King Alfred
894				- siege at Exeter is related in this annal, plus it adds that King Guthred died
895		- King Guthred died, buried at York		

Year	Neots	Æthelweard	Asser	HR I
900	- shorter account of the rebel Æthelwold	- Æthelbald is consecrated archbishop of York	- same	- Æthelbald is consecrated archbishop of York
902	- has this under 903			
903	- has this under 904	- has this under 902, with details but lacks a mention of Æthelwold		- mentions both the death of one of the nobles, without context
906				- claims it was done out of necessity
910	- action is placed at Wodensfield	- adds many details to the battle, dating it to the 5 th of August 909; also adds to the list of fallen Viking kings a king named Inwær		- makes mention of the battle without adding context
919				- same
920				
926				
927				- only mentions the expulsion of King Guthfrith
937		- place is called <i>Brunandun</i> - lacks mention of King Olaf		- place is called <i>Wendune</i> - lacks mention of the Dublin origin of King Olaf

Year	Neots	Æthelweard	Asser	HR I
940				- King Olaf is said to have arrived in 939; he is besieged in Leicester by King Edmund, but the archbishops Oda and Wulfstan reconcile the kings; here Watling-Street is set as boundary between territories of the kings
942				- similar to <i>ASC E</i> - King Olaf succeeded by Olaf Sihtricson
943				
944		- adds that Archbishop Wulfstan and a Mercian ealdorman expelled the Viking kings		- same, though 943 states Northumbrians drove out King Olaf, while the annal of 945 suggests Edmund got rid of both kings before that year
947				- adds that Eric Bloodaxe was chosen king, under 948
948				- has a shorter account of this under 950
949				
950				
952				
954		- simply states the submission of the Northumbrians when Edmund ascended to the throne		

Table of Comparison - Later Anglo-Norman Sources

Year	HR II	Symeon	Worcester	Malmesbury	Gaimar	Howden	Wendover
867	- adds that King Egbert was installed	- Vikings arrive the 1 st of November - battle of York placed at 21 st of March, Psalm Sunday - adds that Egbert was installed	- claims that civil strife was the punishment of God - claims the walls of York were weak	- Northumbrian's remain in York, and the city is set on fire by the Vikings	- adds many details, see chapter three	- adds that King Egbert was installed	- dates battle of York to 21 st of March, Psalm Sunday - adds that King Egbert was installed
869	- same	- adds ravaging by the Vikings	- same		- refers to this	- same	- same
872	- King Egbert and Archbishop Wulfhere expelled	- King Egbert and Archbishop Wulfhere are expelled - Ricsige succeeds Egbert				- King Egbert and Archbishop Wulfhere expelled	- King Egbert and Archbishop Wulfhere expelled, who go to the king of Mercia
873	- Ricsige succeeds Egbert and Archbishop Wulfhere is restored		- same			- Egbert succeed by Ricsige and Archbishop Wulfhere is restored	- ravaging by Vikings - Egbert is succeeded by Ricsige and Archbishop Wulfhere is restored
875	- Vikings destory monasteries		- same		- only mentions struggle against Picts, Strathclyde, and Galloway - Repton is mentioned as well	- same	- same

Year	HR II	Symeon	Worcester	Malmesbury	Gaimar	Howden	Wendover
876	- King Ricsige died, and Egbert succeeds in Northumbria beyond the Tyne		- same			- King Ricsige is succeeded by Egbert	- King Ricsige is succeeded by Egbert
892	- Archbishop Wulfhere died, in 39 th year of his office						
893			- has this under 894	- has a summary of all campaigns of King Alfred	- no reference is made to reinforcements from Northumbria	- has this under 896	- same
894	- King Guthred dies and peace is made with King Alfred	- King Guthred dies and King Alfred takes over until his death				- has this under 893	
895						- Æthelbald succeeds Archbishop Wulfhere in 898	- Archbishop Wulfhere dies and Æthelbald succeeds him
900	- Æthelbald is consecrated archbishop of York		- adds that Æthelwold offered to be one of the <i>comitatus</i> of the Danes, who then elevated him to kingship; all this is dated to 901				

Year	<i>HR II</i>	Symeon	Worcester	Malmesbury	Gaimar	Howden	Wendover
902							- same but adds details of 903
903	- has this under 904, without the details of the <i>ASC</i>		- has this under 905			- the battle of the Holme is mentioned, Æthelwold is not	- has this under 902
906	- peace initiated by Vikings, who perceived Edward as invincible	- peace initiated by Vikings, who perceived Edward as invincible				- same	
910	- has this under 911, no details		- has battle under 911, at Wodensfield - the kings Eowils and Healfdene are identified as brothers of King Inguar		- possibly has a reference to this under 910, when a fleet arrived bringing great bloodshed to the country, but without details	- this is possibly referred to under 907, which simply mentions a battle which is won by Edward at <i>Teotenhale</i>	- has the battle under 911, at Wodensfield
919		- has this in relation with St Cuthbert, whose lands are taken away by Ragnald			- mentions this under 923	- refers to Ragnald as king of Northumbria in 917 but omits capture of York	
920	- same, under 921		- same, under 921			- same, under 917	- same, under 921

Year	<i>HR II</i>	Symeon	Worcester	Malmesbury	Gaimar	Howden	Wendover
926	- same, under 925		- same, under 925	- same, undated		- same, under 920	- has this under 925, adds that Sihtric was baptized for wedding but renounced the new faith, then he dies.
927	- same, under 926		- same, under 926		- same	- same, under 921	- same, under 926
937	- same, though it lacks mention of Dublin origin King Olaf	- adds that St Cuthbert helped in assuring victory - lacks mention of Dublin origin King Olaf	- adds that Constantine, king of the Scots, is father in law of King Olaf - lacks mention Dublin origin King Olaf	- adds that victory was achieved thanks to St Aldhelm	- no mention of King Olaf	- same, though lacks mention of Ireland	- place is called <i>Bruneberih</i> - adds that King Olaf is invited by Constantine, king of the Scots
940	- King Olaf is chosen in 941 by Northumbrians		- same, under 941	- same		- same, under 941	- same as in <i>HR I</i>
942	- same as D		- same as D			- relates first account of D, then E, both under 941	- same as D and E, adding expulsion of King Olaf Cuaran and Rægnald
943	- same		- same	- baptism as part of surrender		- same	- same (see 941)
944	- same		- same	- expulsion not attributed to King Eadred	- adds that kings ruled together	- same	- same, under 941

Year	<i>HR II</i>	Symeon	Worcester	Malmesbury	Gaimar	Howden	Wendover
947	- adds choosing of Eric Bloodaxe, all under 949		- under 949, makes mention of Eric Bloodaxe			- makes mention of Eric Bloodaxe	- make mention of Eric Bloodaxe
948	- same, under 950		- same, under 950	- same		- same	- same
949					- same		
950							- tells of death King Eric
952	- same		- same	- same	- same	- same	- same, under 951
954	- only mentions release of Archbishop Wulfstan		- only mentions release of Archbishop Wulfstan	- same	- same	- only mentions release of Archbishop Wulfstan, under 953	- only mentions release of Archbishop Wulfstan, under 953

Bibliographical information:

Here follows a list of references per annal. Note that references are given to books and chapters were possible. If the work is of an annalistic nature such as the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, only page numbers are given for the information can be found under the relevant annal.

867: Neots, pp. 53-54; Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 2, pp. 35-36; Asser, ch. 27, pp. 22-23; *HR I*, pp. 74-75; *HR II*: pp. 105-106; Simeon, bk. 2, ch. 6, pp. 94-99; Worcester, pp. 280-283; Malmesbury, book 2, par. 120, pp. 180-181; Howden, p. 415; Wendover, pp. 189-190.

869: Neots, p. 56; Asser, ch. 31, p. 25; *HR I*, p. 76; *HR II*, p. 106; Simeon, bk. 2, ch. 6, pp. 98-99; Worcester, pp. 284-285; Geffrei, l. 2859, pp. 156-157; Howden, p. 416; Wendover, p. 191.

872: *HR II*, p. 110; Symeon, bk. 2, ch. 6, pp. 98-99; Howden, p. 417; Wendover, p. 206.

873: Neots, p. 70; Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 3, p. 40; Asser, ch. 45, p. 34; *HR I*, p. 81; *HR II*, p. 110; Worcester, pp. 302-303; Howden, p. 417; Wendover, p. 207.

875: Neots, p. 71; Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 3, p. 41; Asser, ch. 47, pp. 35-36; *HR I*, p. 82; *HR II*, p. 110; Worcester, pp. 304-305; Geffrei, ll. 3065-3067, 3074, pp. 168-169; Howden, p. 417; Wendover, p. 208.

876: Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 3, p. 41; Asser, ch. 50, p. 38; *HR II*, p. 111; Worcester, pp. 306-307; Howden, p. 417; Wendover, p. 209.

892: *HR I*, p. 92; *HR II*, p. 119.

893: Neots, pp. 96-98; Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 3, p. 50; *HR I*, p. 92; Worcester, pp. 338-347; Malmesbury, book 2, par. 121, pp. 180-183; Geffrei, ll. 3383-3434, pp. 184-189; Howden, pp. 420-421; Wendover, pp. 228-230.

894: *HR I*, p. 92; *HR II*, p. 119; Symeon, bk. 2, ch. 14, pp. 126-129; Howden, p. 420.

895: Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 3, p. 51; Howden, p. 421; Wendover, p. 231.

900: Neots, p. 104; Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 4, p. 52; *HR I*, p. 92; *HR II*, p. 121; Worcester, p. 356-357.

902: Neots, p. 104; Wendover, pp. 235-236.

903: Neots, pp. 104-105; Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 4, p. 52; *HR I*, p. 92; *HR II*, p. 121; Worcester, pp. 357-361; Howden, p. 421; Wendover, p. 235-236.

906: *HR I*, p. 92; *HR II*, p. 121; Worcester, pp. 360-361; Howden, p. 421.

910: Neots, pp. 105-106; Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 4, p. 53; *HR I*, pp. 92-93; *HR II*, p. 122; Worcester, pp. 364-367; Geffrei, ll. 3487-3488, pp. 190-191; Howden, p. 421; Wendover, p. 238.

919: *HR I*, p. 93; Symeon, bk. 2, ch. 16, pp. 130-131; Geffrei, ll. 3505-3506, pp. 192-193; Howden, p. 422.

920: *HR II*, p. 123; Worcester, pp. 382-383; Howden, p. 422; Wendover, p. 245.

926: *HR II*, p. 124; Worcester, pp. 386-387; Malmesbury, bk. 2, par. 131, pp. 206-207; Howden, p. 421; Wendover, p. 245.

927: *HR I*, p. 93; *HR II*, p. 124; Worcester, pp. 386-387; Geffrei, ll. 3513-3516, pp. 192-193; Wendover, p. 245.

937: Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 5, 54; *HR I*, p. 93; *HR II*, p. 125; Symeon, bk. 2, ch. 18, pp. 138-139; Worcester, pp. 392-393; Malmesbury, bk. 2, par. 131, pp. 206-209; Geffrei, ll. 3517-3529, pp. 192-193; Howden, p. 422; Wendover, p. 249.

940: *HR I*, p. 93-94; *HR II*, p. 125; Worcester, pp. 394-395; Malmesbury, bk. 2, par. 141, pp. 228-229; Howden, p. 423; Wendover, p. 251.

942: *HR I*, p. 94; *HR II*, p. 125; Worcester, pp. 396-397; Howden, p. 423; Wendover, pp. 251-252.

943: *HR II*, pp. 125-126; Worcester, pp. 396-397; Malmesbury, bk. 2, par. 141, pp. 228-229;

Howden, p. 423; Wendover, p. 252.

944: Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 6, p. 54; *HR* I, p. 94; *HR* II, p. 126; Worcester, pp. 398-399; Malmesbury, bk. 2, par. 141, pp. 228-229; Geffrei, ll. 3529-3538, pp. 192-193; Howden, p. 423; Wendover, p. 252.

947: *HR* I, p. 94; *HR* II, p. 126; Worcester, pp. 400-401; Howden, p. 423; Wendover, p. 255.

948: *HR* I, p. 94; *HR* II, pp. 126-127; Worcester, pp. 400-401; Malmesbury, bk. 2, par. 146, pp. 236-237; Howden, p. 423; Wendover, p. 255.

949: Geffrei, ll. 3547-3550, pp. 194-195.

952: *HR* II, p. 127; Worcester, pp. 402-403; Malmesbury, bk. 2, par. 146, pp. 236-237; Geffrei, ll. 3551-3554, pp. 194-195; Howden, p. 423; Wendover, p. 256.

954: Æthelweard, book 4, ch. 7, p. 55; *HR* II, p. 127; Worcester, pp. 402-403; Malmesbury, bk. 2, par. 146, pp. 236-237; Geffrei, ll. 3555-3558, pp. 194-195; Howden, p. 423; Wendover, p. 256.

Appendix III: Coins

In this appendix one can a picture of a coin from, almost, every king discussed. First, I will give the technical and bibliographical information, thereafter one can find the images. All information and images are derived from the *Corpus of Early Medieval Coin Finds*.⁴⁹⁹

No. 1:

EMC number 1998.2117 (Ref: CR 1998: 117)

Ruler: Sievert/Siefred (895-902)

Type: N 489 (Ebraice Civitas (Cross Pattée)) (895-902)

Mint: York, moneyer uncertain.

Weight: 0.86g. Preservation: large fragment.

Findspot: 'Yorkshire, East Riding', Yorkshire, East Riding, England

Obv. CSIEFRE / [D]IIS RE[X]

Rev. + EB R[...] VI

Source: Coin Register from British Numismatic Journal 68 (1998), no. 117

Image source: CR original plates (300 pixels, resolution not recorded)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which>

No. 2:

EMC number 1985.0063 (Ref: B&B 1985: 63)

Ruler: Cnut (895-902)

Type: N 501 (Cunnetti) (900-905)

Mint: York, moneyer uncertain.

Weight: 1.07g. Die axis: 330. Preservation: chipped and cracked.

Findspot: Southoe, Cambridgeshire, England (TL 1864)

Obv. + CVN : NETI :.

Rev. CNVT RE+

Source: M. Blackburn and M. Bonser, 'Single Finds of Anglo-Saxon and Norman Coins -- 2', *British Numismatic Journal* 55 (1985), pp. 55-78, coin no. 63

Image source: B&B original plates (300 pixels, resolution not recorded)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=3>

⁴⁹⁹ Site: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/> [accessed 6-1-2013].

No. 3:

EMC number 1985.0076 (Ref: BNJ 1985 p. 192 no. 5)

Ruler: Alvald (Æthelwold of Wessex?) (900-902)

Type: N 505 (Alvvaldus) (900-902)

Mint: York, moneyer uncertain.

Weight: 1.23g.

Findspot: North Ferriby, Yorkshire, East Riding, England (SE 9825)

Obv. + AL . VVAL . DVS

Rev. DN-S D-S / . / REX

Source: C. E. Blunt, 'Northumbrian Coins in the Name of Alwaldus', *British Numismatic Journal* 55 (1985), pp. 192-4, p. 192 no. 5

Image source: BNJ published (300 pixels, resolution not recorded)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=9>

No. 4:

EMC number 1017.0116 (Ref: SCBI 17 - Midland: 116)

Ruler: Sievert/Siefred (895-902)

Type: N 509 (Mirabilia Fecit) (895-902)

Mint: York, moneyer uncertain.

Weight: 1.25g. Die axis: 0.

Findspot: Derby, City of Derby, England (SK 3535)

Obv. MIRABILIA FECIT

Rev. DNSX / + REX

Source: A. J. H. Gunstone, *Midland Museums. Ancient British, Anglo-Saxon, and Norman Coins, Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* 17 (1971), coin no. 116

Comments: BNJ xxxvi, 1967, p. 214.

Image source: SCBI published (300 pixels, 300 dpi)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=10>

No. 5:

EMC number 2002.0298 (Ref: Reported by Mr S. Garey)

Ruler: Ragnall (Rægnald) (919-921)

Type: N 531 (Ragnald, Hand) (919-921)

Mint: York (EIORACII), moneyer uncertain.

Weight not recorded.

Findspot: Lincolnshire, Lincolnshire, England

Obv. +RACIITI (or L?)

Rev. +EIORACII

Source: *Coin Register* 2002, no. 171.

Comments: Same reverse die as SCBI Copenhagen 624 (= Blunt and Stewart, NC 1983, no. 4).

Image source: Actual coin (300 pixels, 300 dpi)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=11>

No. 6:

EMC number 1983.0013 (Ref: BCD 2: 17)

Ruler: Sihtric I (921-927)

Type: N 536.1 (Sihtric Caoch, Sword / Hammer) (921-927)

Mint: Five Boroughs (uncertain), moneyer uncertain.

Weight not recorded.

Findspot: Threkingham, Lincolnshire, England (TF 0836)

Obv. SITR / IC REX (R upside-down)

Rev. + INEIAIIIOINI (Ns backwards)

Source: M. Blackburn, C. Colyer, R. M. H. Dolley, 'Early Medieval Coins from Lincoln and its Shire c. 770-1100', Lincoln Archaeological Trust, The Archaeology of Lincoln, vol. VI-1 (1983), table 2: 17

Comments: Drawing from BCD fig. 24. Dolley and Moore 1973

Image source: Drawing (300 pixels, resolution not recorded)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=14>

No. 7:

EMC number 1996.0194 (Ref: CR 1996: 194)

Ruler: Anlaf (Olaf) Guthfrithsson (939-941)

Type: N 537 (Anlaf Guthfrithsson, Raven / Small Cross) (939-941)

Mint: York, moneyer: Æthelferth (Aðelferð).

Weight not recorded. Preservation: broken and incomplete.

Findspot: 'Lincolnshire', Lincolnshire, England

Obv. + ANLAF CVN[]S

Rev. []AÐELFERÐ MINET[]

Source: Coin Register from British Numismatic Journal 66 (1996), no. 194

Image source: CR original plates (300 pixels, resolution not recorded)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=16>

No. 8:

EMC number 2004.0181 (Ref: Reported)

Ruler: Anlaf (Olaf) Sihtricsson (1st reign) (941-944)

Type: N 540 (Anlaf Sihtricsson, Triquetra / Standard) (941-944)

Mint: York, moneyer: Æscwulf (ASCOLV).

Weight: 1.12g.

Findspot: Beverley, near, Yorkshire, East Riding, England (TA 0440)

Obv. +ANLAF CVNVNCC

Rev. +ASCOLV MONETRA

Source: Coin Register 2005, no. 168

Image source: Actual coin (300 pixels, 300 dpi)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=23>

No. 9:

EMC number 2001.1065 (Ref: Bonser notes)

Ruler: Sihtric II Sihtricsson (942-943)

Type: N 545 (Sihtric II, Triquetra / Standard) (942-943)

Mint: York, moneyer uncertain.

Weight: 0.864g. Die axis: 90. Preservation: edge chip.

Findspot: Doncaster, near, Doncaster, England (SE 5702)

Source: Bonser notes (November 1990, /129-130)

Comments: Sotheby's, 4th and 5th October 1990, lot 398 (before restoration)

Image source: Sotheby's catalogue (300 pixels, 300 dpi)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=30>

No. 10:

EMC number 2006.0224 (Ref: BNJ 74 (2004))

Ruler: Ragnall (Rægnald) II Guthfrithsson (943-944)

Type: N 548 (Ragnald Guthfrithsson, Triquetra / Standard) (943-944)

Mint: York, moneyer: Durand (DVRANT).

Weight: 0.62g. Die axis: 30. Preservation: fragment.

Findspot: Middleton on the Wolds, E Yorks, England (SE 9449)

Obv. [].A.:L.:DC.A.NV[]

Rev. +DVRANT[]

Source: BNJ 74 (2004)

Comments: Stewart Lyon and Simon Holmes, 'A new moneyer for the post-Brunanburgh Viking rulers of York', BNJ 74 (2004), 178-80.

Image source: (scanned image (300 pixels, 300 dpi))

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=31>

No. 11:

EMC number 2001.0643 (Ref: Bonser notes)

Ruler: Eric Bloodaxe (2nd reign) (952-954)

Type: N 550 (Eric, Sword) (952-954)

Mint: York, moneyer: Radulf/Raulf/Raul (RAD[]ALE).

Weight not recorded. Preservation: chipped and broken.

Uncertain Findspot.

Obv. ERIC REX

Rev. +RAD[]ALE.

Source: Bonser notes (12/8-9)

Image source: Bonser photograph (300 pixels, 300 dpi)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=34>

No. 12:

EMC number 1004.0592 (Ref: SCBI 4 - Copenhagen: 592)

Ruler: anon. (St Peter) (905-927)

Type: N 556 (St Peter, Phase III, Sword / Hammer I) (921-927)

Mint: York, moneyer uncertain (Eriviitn).

Weight: 1.22g.

Findspot: Boxmoor, Hertfordshire, England (TL 0406)

Obv. SCI PE / TRMO

Rev. + ERIVIITN

Source: G. Galster, Royal Collection, Copenhagen. Part I. Ancient British and Anglo-Saxon Coins, Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles 4 (1964), coin no. 592

Image source: SCBI published (300 pixels, 300 dpi)

See: <http://www-cm.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/dept/coins/emc/fullpage.php?from=list&which=57>



No. 1

No. 2

No. 3

No. 4



No. 5

No. 6

No. 7

No. 8



No. 9

No. 10

No. 11

No. 12