



*Top left.* Canute's first Danish coinage: CNVD REX IN DANORM. Minted in Lund.  
*Top right.* Canute's Swedish coinage: CNVT REX SW. Minted in Sigtuna.  
*Bottom.* Canute's last Danish coinage: CNVT REX IN DA. Minted in Lund.  
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# KING CANUTE'S COINAGE IN THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

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## KING CANUTE'S COINAGE IN THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

THE PRESENT SERIES OF LECTURES IN MEMORY OF MRS Dorothea Coke was inaugurated some years ago by Professor Garmonsway who spoke on *Canute and his Empire*. On the basis of literary sources,<sup>1</sup> he conjured up a detailed and fascinating picture of Canute, the great Danish chief of the Viking Age who in 1017 at the age of 20 became the ruler of England and then proceeded to bring Denmark, Norway and Sweden under his domination. The son of the Viking king Sven Forkbeard and the legendary Sigrid *in stórráða*, he ended his life as the ruler of the lands around the North Sea, as a politician of European standing, greeted as an equal by emperor and pope. The North Sea empire which he built up depended on his own strong personality and collapsed after his untimely death in 1035, never to rise again. Canute's political genius was closely interwoven with an interest in ecclesiastical matters. To quote Sir Frank Stenton, 'He was the first viking leader to be admitted into the civilized fraternity of Christian kings.'<sup>2</sup>

The study of the history of this period embraces two types of source material: first, contemporary primary sources, and second, traditions or stories. It is evident that the first group of sources gives a much more reliable picture of what actually happened in the past than the narrative sources which are often tendentious or distorted.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately the best type of source, contemporary relics of actual historical events, are often very difficult to interpret. There is in Scandinavia a great number of monuments and artifacts of the time of Canute, but it is only rarely that they can be fitted into the complex historical frame-work—indeed, even the large circular military forts in Jutland and the Danish isles can be interpreted only in the most general terms, although they are among the most notable

<sup>1</sup> Garmonsway 1963. See Bibliography and Abbreviations, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Stenton 1947, p. 391.

<sup>3</sup> Icelandic sagas are the most noteworthy of the narrative sources. Their value as sources has been sharply questioned, principally by Weibull 1911.

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monuments of the Scandinavian Viking Age. Contemporary written sources from Canute's time are rare in both England and Scandinavia. In Scandinavia they consist of runic inscriptions—on stones or other artifacts—and legends on coins. Such inscriptions are clearly accepted by historians as a type of primary source material which cannot be contaminated; no tendentious interpretation or uncomprehending transcription can intervene between them and us. Nevertheless, the problem is how to interpret correctly these authentic but brief and simple communications from the past.

A man with the name Canute occurs a number of times on Swedish rune stones and these references are presumably to the king of that name. Sven B. F. Jansson in his Dorothea Coke Memorial Lecture describes a stone from Väsby in Uppland which Alle had raised to his own memory. 'He took Canute's payment in England. God help his soul.' A stone from Yttergårde in Uppland reads: 'And Ulv has in England taken three gelds. That was the first which Toste paid. Then Torkel paid. Then Canute paid.'<sup>1</sup> The third geld mentioned on this stone is presumably the one Canute paid in 1018 to his Scandinavian warriors before they returned home, after he became king of England.

Now to the legends on coins. The first Scandinavian coins with inscriptions were struck about the time Canute was born, at the end of the 990s, and in all three Scandinavian countries.<sup>2</sup> The obverse legend on the Danish coins reads + ZAEN REX AD DÆNER; on the Norwegian coins + ONLAF REX NOR; and on the Swedish + OLVF REX ZPEVOX, with some variations (pl. I:8-10). ZAEN means Sven (Forkbeard), Canute's father, king of the Danes; ONLAF is Olaf Tryggvason, the hero of Snorri's description of the battle of Svolder; OLVF means Canute's elder half-brother, Olof Skötkonung, king of the Swedes. According to tradition, Olof Skötkonung's mother was widowed when her husband fell in battle on the Fyris plain near Uppsala and she then married Sven Forkbeard.

On the obverse all these coins have a picture of a king with diadem and sceptre but the portraits in this small gallery of prominent people of the generation which preceded Canute in Scandinavia about the year 1000 are stereotypes. The craftsmen who carved the

<sup>1</sup> Jansson 1965, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Malmer 1961, pp. 229-40.

die simply tried to imitate the picture of King Æthelred on contemporary English coins (the *Crux* type, pl. 1:1). But the short legends are authentic, giving the name of the king, the name of the country and (on the reverse) the name of the moneyer. The Swedish coins also have the name of the place where the coin was struck, Sigtuna.

The coin legends are very important source material. Apart from the legends, various physical characteristics of coins may also help the scholar, such as the weight, the silver content and the combinations of obverse and reverse. The coins differ in another important way from other written sources of Canute's time in that they are rather numerous. The first Scandinavian coins with inscriptions which I have just described are admittedly not very numerous—the Norwegian Onlaf coin is only known in three copies—but in the time of Canute the picture changed. Certain types now become so abundant that they can be used for statistical purposes. Thus King Canute's coinage in the Northern countries provides important additional evidence for our knowledge of economic and political conditions in the period of his North Sea empire.

Right down to the beginning of the sixteenth century all coins were made by hand. The blank was placed on a fixed bottom die while another die was held over it—the coin was struck with the aid of a hammer. The fact that the hand-held top die wore out sooner than the fixed bottom die and had to be replaced provides the numismatist with one of his most important methods in studying such primitive monetary systems as that of Scandinavia in the time of Canute: the study of die-links. Hand-made dies are never completely identical so there is usually no difficulty in distinguishing the impressions of different dies. A bottom die A corresponds to the upper dies a, b, and some of c. A bottom die B corresponds to the rest of the upper die c, as well as to d and e. This means that the coins Aa and Be stand in close relationship to one another despite the fact that they may look quite different. In England a great deal of work has been done on such die-links, particularly on the often very difficult task of distinguishing between English and Scandinavian coins during the first decades of the eleventh century.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lyon-v.d. Meer-Dolley 1962.

The Viking Age in Scandinavia is often characterized as a Silver Age. All silver had to be imported and during the ninth and tenth centuries almost all of it came from the east, from the Caliphate. The coins were Arabic *dirhams*. German coins began to appear in the hoards in the second half of the tenth century and in the 990s a flood of English coins begins to appear. In Scandinavia coins from the different countries are mixed together in the great hoards, many of which also contain silver jewellery and silver cut from other objects ('hack silver'). Most of the hoards are found on Gotland and in south and central Sweden. In all we know of some 160,000 Arabic, German and English coins from the Viking Age found in Sweden, most of them now in the Royal Coin Cabinet in Stockholm.

In Scandinavia payment was made by weight; small collapsible scales were carried to weigh the silver and a piece of a silver brooch was as acceptable as a coin or part of a coin. In England, however, there had been a well-organized monetary system for a long time: the king's portrait on the coin guaranteed the weight and standard and the coins had an acceptable face value in the market. In Scandinavia it is clear from the hoards that coins were weighed together with other silver, even when some of the coins were struck at home. There was quite simply no appreciation of the idea of a state guarantee—on the contrary, the silver standard was tested very carefully and the coins were bent and pecked to test their content, just like any other silver.

At the end of the 990s, then, the rulers of the three Scandinavian countries started almost simultaneously to produce coins with legends on both sides, closely related to contemporary English coins. It is clear that this sudden interest in producing native coins with legends is closely associated with the enormous geds or tribute which the English started to pay the Scandinavian countries in the 990s and which for several decades provided Scandinavia with a stream of English silver coins. It seems, however, that the production of these first inscribed coins quickly ceased in all three Northern countries. The coins which display identifiable names of kings number less than three hundred, most of them Swedish. Another much larger group of about 2000 coins also imitates English coins, although of a different type, the so-called *Long Cross* (pl. 1:2).

Sometimes it is possible to trace the name Æthelred, but otherwise the legends are completely meaningless and give no clue to their origin (pl. 2:1-2). The great Swedish numismatist, Bror Emil Hildebrand, believed them to be counterfeit and presumed they were struck in England, but Michael Dolley believes they are all of Scandinavian origin.<sup>1</sup> Some of them may be connected by means of die-links to the Sigtuna coinage of Olof Skötkonung, while others may be a continuation of Sven Forkbeard's Danish coinage.<sup>2</sup> It is particularly curious that a coin may look like a normal English coin on the one side while on the other side the legend, which is often derived from an entirely different English type, is completely meaningless. This large group of barbarized imitations of English coins of Æthelred can in general be considered a precursor of Canute's coinage in the Northern countries. They were presumably struck at different places and it is impossible, as yet, to say which are Danish and which Norwegian or Swedish. Indeed, it is not clear whether they fill the entire chronological gap between the production of the early coins of Sven Forkbeard, Olaf Tryggvason and Olof Skötkonung about the year 1000 and the period of Canute's accession in Denmark in 1018, or whether minting ceased for some time, perhaps even for a whole decade, before the appearance of the first Danish coins bearing Canute's name. The Scandinavian hoards of the Viking Age contain an extensive but largely unstudied material relevant to the solution of this problem.

To sum up, it may be said that the indigenous background to Canute's Scandinavian coinage was primitive. Although there had been an attempt to produce legend-bearing coins of a west European type some twenty years previously, this had resulted in a not readily identifiable coinage of barbaric character, with inscriptions that were usually meaningless. This early native coinage had little or no influence on the economic attitudes of the contemporary population; in Scandinavia people continued to pay with a weight of silver, and not by the face value of coins.

At the time of the Danish invasions the English monetary system was extremely well organized; in some respects it had no counter-

<sup>1</sup> Hildebrand 1881, pp. 165-6; Lyon-v.d. Meer-Dolley 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Malmer 1965, pp. 50-7.



part in Europe. There were about a hundred mints throughout the country where special officials—moneyers—were responsible for producing coins. Recent research has suggested that all the coins in circulation had to be exchanged for coins of another type after a certain number of years, and this served as a kind of taxation. Michael Dolley thinks the period of circulation for each type was six years, while Bertil A. Petersson suggests seven years.<sup>1</sup> We have, presumably, not yet heard the last word on this subject. But the sequence of the coin types and their approximate date are quite well established: *Crux*, *Long Cross*, *Helmet*, *Small Cross*, which in Dolley's view belonged to 991-7, 997-1003, 1003-9 and 1009-17 respectively (pl. 1:1-4). Chaotic military and political conditions during this period may explain why the *Small Cross* type remained in circulation for as much as eight years and through the reign of more than one ruler. Next comes Canute's first independent coin type, *Quatrefoil*, which Dolley dates from 1017 to 1023, then the *Pointed Helmet*, 1023-9, and the *Short Cross*, 1029-35 (pl. 1:5-7). The English coin types are very constant: it is almost unknown for the obverse of one type to be found on the same coin with the reverse of another type—a commonplace among the Scandinavian imitations. Compared with their Scandinavian counterparts English coins also have a remarkably constant weight. Bertil A. Petersson's exhaustive study now enables us to consider in detail the weight of the various coin types, although it must be remembered that considerable variations in weight occur within each type, especially in Æthelred's last issue, the *Small Cross* type. With Canute's first independent type, the *Quatrefoil*, the average weight falls from 1.32 to 1.06 grams and this reduced weight is maintained almost unchanged right on to about 1050. Another change occurs with Canute's second type, the *Pointed Helmet*, in that the variations in weight within the different coin types become insignificant. Dolley has further emphasized that at the same time many of the previously easily distinguishable local types disappear.<sup>2</sup> It will become clear that these changes, which occur especially from the *Pointed Helmet* type onwards, have a particular significance for the development of the Scandinavian monetary system.

<sup>1</sup> Dolley-Metcalf 1961, pp. 152-3; Petersson 1969, pp. 85-7.

<sup>2</sup> Dolley-Ingold 1961 and Lyon-v.d. Meer-Dolley 1962, p. 235.

Canute's empire therefore embraced two greatly contrasting monetary systems: on the one hand England had a highly sophisticated system which was, in the course of his reign, to achieve an even higher degree of perfection, while on the other hand, the North still used silver by weight as the commonest form of payment and had a rudimentary coinage. I cannot here discuss the whole question of Canute's coinage in the Northern countries, but I should like to try to present some aspects which particularly illuminate the interplay between a sophisticated and a primitive monetary system.

Our basic study of Denmark's monetary history during the eleventh century is still Hauberg's *Myntforhold og Udmyntninger*, published in 1900. Hauberg assigns no less than sixty Danish coin types to Canute, an impressive number when we consider that there are only three types from his reign in England. But many of these sixty types are represented by only one or by very few examples, and some types do not carry Canute's name at all but have been attributed to him on stylistic grounds. To the material presented by Hauberg we may add at least five hundred imitations of Canute's English types with blundered legends, corresponding to the blundered Æthelred imitations and partly combined with them.

If, however, we select those Hauberg types which, on the one hand, occur in significant numbers and in a significant number of hoards and, on the other, display legends referring them to Canute, we find that the following picture emerges. Three types dominate. The first is an imitation of Æthelred's last type, the *Small Cross*, Hauberg 1 (frontispiece, top left); the second is a rather problematic Anglo-Scandinavian hybrid, Hauberg 54; and the third shows a snake, a purely Scandinavian motif, Hauberg 20 (frontispiece, bottom, and pl. 2:11-12). The coins belonging to the first type, weighing about 1.5 grams, are considerably heavier than the other types. Because the tendency in Denmark—as in England—was gradually to reduce the weight of the coins, it is reasonable to consider this the first Danish coin type produced by Canute, at least the first produced in any quantity. Certain other circumstances support this conclusion. Canute became king of Denmark after the death of his brother Harald in 1018, one year after he ascended the English throne. I consider it most probable that the date of Harald's death

provides us with a *terminus post quem* for Canute's earliest Danish coin: the legend of this coin reads *CNUD REX IN DANORUM* and it seems reasonable to suppose that this was struck after his brother's death. It is also noteworthy that on this coin the king's name is spelt with a D, while on all other coins, English and Danish, it is spelt with a T. But Æthelred's *Small Cross* coins had already been withdrawn from circulation in England in 1017, according to our current chronology, and immediately replaced by the *Quatrefoil* type. The *Small Cross* and *Long Cross* coins which, according to Hildebrand, initiated Canute's English coinage have all, with only one exception, been assigned to Scandinavia by Dolley.<sup>1</sup> The Scandinavian coinage in the 990s demonstrated the desire to imitate coin types then valid in England. It is therefore curious that Canute should have chosen as his first Danish coin a type which had been withdrawn from circulation in England during the previous year. The reverse inscription on Canute's first Danish coinage is the first literary source ever to mention the town of Lund by name, for centuries the most important town in Denmark: + ASCETEL M O LUNDI. Canute's first Danish coinage was certainly no casual matter from either a political or an economic point of view. One might have expected him to copy the new *Quatrefoil* type, for these coins are very common in Scandinavian hoards and large quantities of them must have formed part of the *geld* Canute paid to his warriors on their return home in 1018 (mentioned on the rune stone from Yttergårde quoted above). We must therefore conclude either that our chronological framework is at fault and that Canute's Danish coins were struck before the introduction of the *Quatrefoil* type in England, or that there was some practical reason for choosing a type of coinage already obsolete in England for the new town of Lund. Our chronology, however, is well supported by evidence from independent sources—it does not seem possible that the *Quatrefoil* type was introduced in England later than 1017. The other possibility must therefore be examined in greater detail.

To my knowledge there is not a single coin among the genuine *Quatrefoil* imitations (with *Quatrefoil* on both obverse and reverse) which has Canute's name on the obverse and the name of Lund on

<sup>1</sup> Lyon-v.d. Meer-Dolley 1962.

the reverse—in Lund *Small Cross* imitations dominate. On the other hand, there are genuine *Quatrefoil* imitations carrying Canute's name together with the names of other Danish towns, Roskilde and Ribe. A similar tendency for types to be found concentrated in different regions is also demonstrated in the imitations of Canute's later types, the *Pointed Helmet* and *Short Cross* types, which are comparatively rare at the main mint of Lund but common elsewhere, e.g. at Sigtuna. It would therefore seem that, especially in the initial stages of the new Danish coinage, dies copying different English types were distributed to different mints and that types no longer in use in England were also utilized. The reason for assigning an obsolete type to the important town of Lund in Skåne may well have been the very real possibility of confusion with coins from London—the spelling of both names often appears in identical form on the coins, LVND or LVNDI for instance.

It would, however, almost certainly be a mistake to take these facts to mean that something of the superior English monetary organization was actually introduced into Denmark with Canute's accession to the throne. In the shadow of these attempts to organize the Danish coinage on the English model a jungle of mixed coin types of different dates flourished. In their paper 'Some Scandinavian Coins of Æthelraed, Cnut and Harthacnut attributed by Hildebrand to English mints', published in the *British Numismatic Journal* in 1961, Dolley, Lyon and van der Meer have assembled an impressive group of coins of Hildebrand's types A and B—that is, *Small Cross* and *Long Cross* bearing Canute's name—along with other coins, often with incorrect type combinations, which are associated with die-links. The authors attribute no less than 58 of Hildebrand's numbers to Scandinavia, a considerable increase on Hauberg's original figure.

Dolley and his co-authors base their work on coins bearing an English royal title. I have based my own study on coins bearing the Danish title. A third group lies between these two. It consists of Canute imitations with blundered legends. These form the group of about five hundred coins, mentioned above, which are sometimes die-linked to coins with the English royal title and sometimes to coins bearing the Danish title. Let us look, then, at some of these puzzling Anglo-Danish blundered die-links. The die-links and

Dolley's dates of four coins of this kind are shown on the diagram, fig. 1. On the *Quatrefoil* coin Canute is styled REX DÆNORVMA—the final letter A presumably standing for England. On the *Small Cross* coin he appears as REX ANGLORVM, though in a slightly blundered form. The *Quatrefoil* obverse appears with three different reverses, belonging to three different types. Two of the reverse inscriptions are blundered, the third one reads: LEOFNOTH MO WIN, that is Winchester. Dolley and Lyon suggest that the obverse die was, despite Canute's Danish title, manufactured in England and then exported to Scandinavia.<sup>1</sup>

The diagram in fig. 2 shows three different *Quatrefoil* obverses. The first two are well executed and carry the English royal title; the third is barbarized, the bust reversed and the text blundered. All three are linked by the same *Small Cross* reverse variant with an illegible inscription. On close inspection, however, the obverse legends show minor irregularities and, according to Dolley, they are of Scandinavian manufacture.

The third diagram, fig. 3, shows the obverse side of five *Small Cross* coins, all struck from the same die describing Canute as king of England. Apart from the fact that the die is very worn, nothing distinguishes this obverse from that of an original English coin. On the reverse, however, the coins represent two different types, *Small Cross* and *Quatrefoil*, and three mints, in the Danish towns Viborg and Lund and a place whose name may be interpreted as Slagelse. The fifth coin carries a totally confused legend. But this is just a part of one of the die-links described by Dolley, Lyon and van der Meer; in its complete form the link also includes the English mint names of Chester and Stamford.<sup>2</sup>

This mixture of English and Scandinavian elements is indeed confusing. Bror Emil Hildebrand solved the dilemma by assigning all the coins to England. Viborg for instance he considered to be the place called Weybridge. Dolley on the other hand believes all these coins to be Scandinavian. He suggests that the English dies were either captured or deliberately exported to Scandinavia. In his presidential address to the Royal Numismatic Society, published in the *British Numismatic Journal* (1970), Stuart Lyon presents an additional

<sup>1</sup> Lyon-v.d. Meer-Dolley 1962, p. 244; Lyon 1970, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Lyon-v.d. Meer-Dolley 1962, p. 240.

IN THE NORTHERN COUNTRIES

OBVERSE

*Type Small Cross 1009-17*

+ENVREXAN'LOLM

*Type Quatrefoil 1017-23*

+ENVTREXD'ENORVMA

REVERSE

*Type Helmet 1003-09*

+III IIIIØI PIII IOO°

*Type Small Cross 1009-17*

+C'FOIIFOOEIIIO

*Type Quatrefoil 1017-23*

+LE/OFN:/ØM/OPIN

OBVERSE

*Type Quatrefoil 1017-23*

+ENVTR'EXANGLORV

+ENVTREXANGLORN

*Type Quatrefoil irreg.*

+IOTV||HON||DO||ID

REVERSE

*Type Small Cross irreg.*

XCI||IO-||I||E||O||V

OBVERSE

*Type Small Cross 1009-17*

+ENVTREXANGLORV

REVERSE

*Type Small Cross 1009-17*

+SVARTGOLM-OPIB:

+SVARTGOLMOPIBR°:

+VLFCE TELM-OVSTLA

+I)/I-O-||E°|||OOOI

*Type Quatrefoil 1017-23*

+ØO/REØ/MOL/VND

Figs. 1-3. Anglo-Danish blundered die-links.

explanation: the travelling moneyer. I quote: 'It provides at one and the same time a means of explaining unusual obverse die-links between different moneyers at different mints, and a warning against accepting the mint-signature on a coin at its face value, particularly if the coin is a stylistic oddity for the mint.'<sup>1</sup> But if the dies with quite readable inscriptions are not always attributable to either a place or a person, even in England, can the die-links then be used to distinguish between coins manufactured in Scandinavia and those manufactured in the British Isles? The puzzling die-link chains which we have just studied suggest that this is not the case.

I have already said that the introduction of the *Quatrefoil* type in England coincides with a definite lowering of the average weight of a coin from 1.32 to 1.06 grams. Canute's earliest Danish coinage, of which we have just seen some examples, is considerably heavier. The standard of weight of the Danish coins was not so well controlled as the English. The average weight of this early group is about 1.48 grams; this applies to coins bearing Canute's Danish title and other coins associated with them through die-links. The coins in Dolley's die-link chains are also heavy; the coins equivalent to Hildebrand's group A have an average weight of 1.52 grams. This certainly suggests that the die-linked coins with the English title do not belong to the official English coinage. It is also noteworthy that the early Scandinavian coinage, especially the Swedish *Cruz* and *Long Cross* imitations from the period about 1000, tend to be heavier than their English contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> Several theories have been advanced on the standard of weight of Scandinavian coins and its relation to English and Continental standards. I cannot go into this problem here. I shall merely state that as far as weight is concerned there is no parity between Canute's earliest Danish coinage and his contemporary coinage in England.

To summarise: Canute's first Danish coinage is almost entirely English in its design, but the legends show many Scandinavian traits. If Dolley's long die-link chains are to be transferred in their entirety to Scandinavia, it would mean a considerable and almost incredible increase in English features in the Danish coinage, often involving the importation of English dies. The incorporation of

<sup>1</sup> Lyon 1970, p. 203.

<sup>2</sup> Malmer 1965, pp. 27-34.

coins of completely English appearance within the Scandinavian corpus would further emphasize the contrasts and contradictions within the early Danish monetary system: for the sophisticated craftsmanship of English die-cutting stands out sharply against the barbarized copies and blundered legends of the die-link series.

Denmark was naturally the central part of Canute's empire. In Norway Olaf Haraldsson was king for most of the 1020s, and in Sweden Anund Jacob had succeeded his father Olof Skötkonung (Canute's half-brother). Canute's presence in the Northern countries began to make itself felt as a threat and Olaf Haraldsson and Anund Jacob formed an alliance. The struggle for ascendancy came to a head at the battle of Helgeå not far from Lund, which ended in a victory for Canute—that is, if we believe the poet:

Swedes you drove off, Sovereign  
Sowing treasure, but greatly  
Wolf got what lures wolf-pack  
Once by Holy River.<sup>1</sup>

In the famous letter he wrote to his subjects in 1027 Canute calls himself king of all England, Denmark, Norway and part of Sweden: after the battle of Helgeå his realm had increased to become one of the largest in the world.<sup>2</sup>

The die-link table, fig. 4, shows one of Dolley's most interesting die-link chains.<sup>3</sup> Its starting point is a coin with the reverse inscription *ASTHRITH MO NOR*, *Asthriith monetarius norwegiae* (rev. 1). The die-link table shows how five different Æthelred and Canute coins are associated through the Asthrith die (obv. 1, 4, 5, 7, 9). In total the chain includes three Æthelred types and one Canute type, the names of two kings, Æthelred and Canute, and the names of at least eight moneyers and six towns, Canterbury, Huntingdon,

<sup>1</sup> Svíum hnekkðir þú, sökva  
siklingr þorr, (enn mikla  
ylgr) þars ó en helga,  
(ulfs beitu fekk) heitir.

Óttarr svarti, *Knútsdrápa* 11, from E. A. Kock, *Den norsk-isländska Skaldediktningen* (1946-50), I, 141.

<sup>2</sup> Stenton 1947, pp. 397-404.

<sup>3</sup> Lyon-v.d. Meer-Dolley 1962, pl. XIII: K.



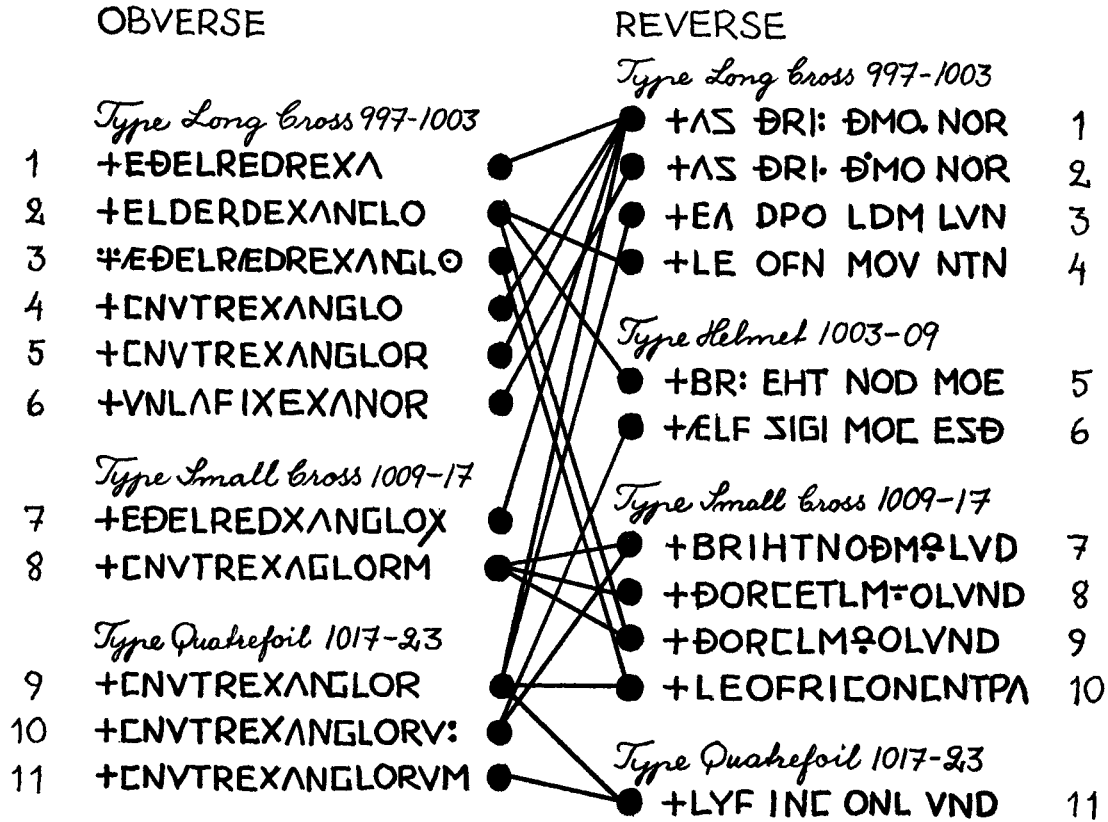


Fig. 4. Die-link chain (after Lyon-v.d. Meer-Dolley 1962).

London (which might be Lund), Norwich (which might be Norway), York and an unidentified *Cesth*.

Obverse 6—reverse 2 make a coin bearing the name of Unlaf, more familiarly known to us as Olaf Haraldsson. The reverse inscription, ASTHRITH MO NOR, is not identical but very like the other Asthrith coins (rev. 1): the individual letters appear to have been made with the same punch on both dies, the only difference is a few dots.

We thus have a large number of coins which, because of the Asthrith series, ought to have been struck in Scandinavia and particularly in Norway. I cannot help feeling that it may be significant that the Unlaf coin, the only coin in the series which the inscription shows to be definitely Scandinavian, is not die-linked with the others, however similar the reverse may be.

We leave Canute's supposed Norwegian coinage and turn to his Swedish coins. The *Long Cross* type of Æthelred, dated by Dolley 997-1003, was the one most frequently imitated at the turn of the century in the unlocalized and undatable Scandinavian series with its meaningless legends. The *Long Cross* type was still used in Sigtuna in central Sweden during the 1020s (pl. 2:3). It was at Sigtuna too that Canute's later types, the *Pointed Helmet* and the *Short Cross*, were used more than anywhere else in Scandinavia; the *Quatrefoil* type on the other hand was never used there. Other rare types were also used in Sigtuna, for instance the *Agnus Dei* (pl. 2:5-6).<sup>1</sup> On the die-link chain, fig. 5, the blundered *Agnus Dei* obverse (7) can be seen linked first with the moneyer Wulf of Sigtuna (rev. 6) and second with Oban in Lund (rev. 2). The Oban die is in turn linked with a *Long Cross* obverse with Canute's English title (2); this coin is assigned by Hildebrand to London and by Dolley to Scandinavia. *Anund rex Situnæ* (obv. 1, 3), *Cnut rex sveorum* (6) and a couple of blundered obverse legends are in turn linked with the moneyers Thormoth and Wulf of Sigtuna (1, 3, 4-6, 9-11), Oban of Lund (2), and three blundered reverse legends (7, 8, 12). The images are modelled on three Æthelred types and two English types of Canute. This die-link series differs, however, in certain respects from the series we examined earlier, fig. 4. The most important of the differences is the undeniable Scandinavian association of the majority of

<sup>1</sup> Lagerqvist 1968, p. 394.

# KING CANUTE'S COINAGE

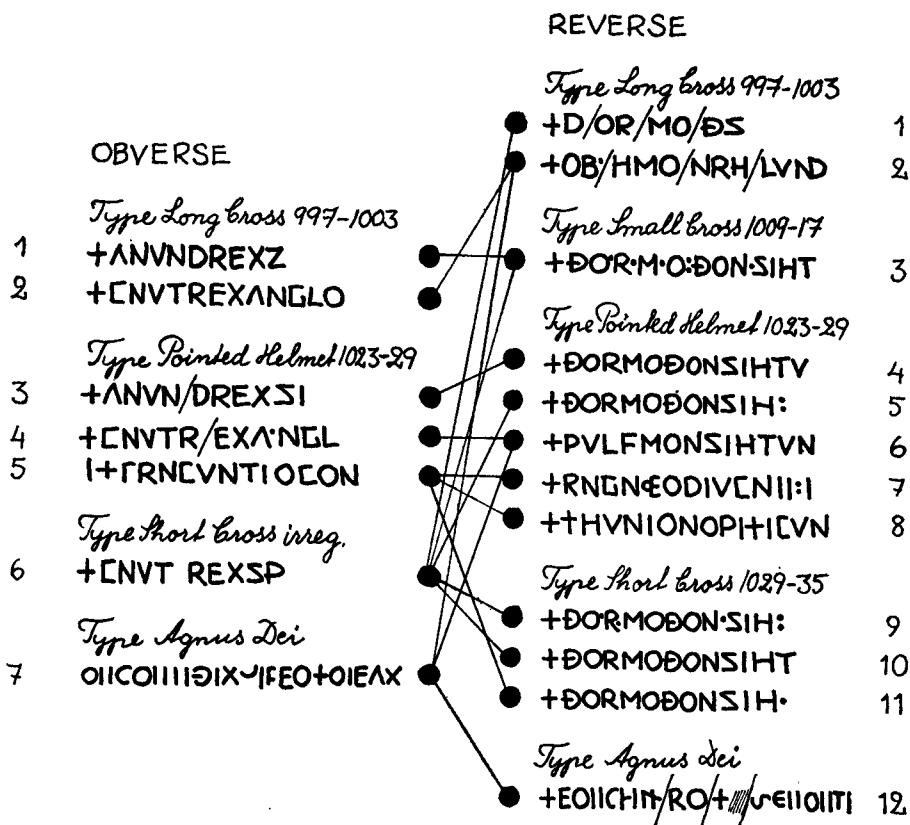


Fig. 5. Die-links of Canute's Scandinavian coins.

the coins through the names of Anund and Sigtuna. Here we are not presented, as we were before, with names of double meaning such as Lund and London or Norwich and Norway. Another important difference is that the only foreign name, Canute, is elucidated by various independent sources. Canute's letter and the Icelandic scaldic poems both state that he conquered the Svear, and the battle of Helgeå also finds mention in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*.

This die-link chain seems to me natural and likely in view of the undeveloped monetary system at that time. At its core it is firmly fixed to a geographical locality and it embraces interpretable names of rulers. At the same time it also embraces a fairly large number of corrupt legends and certain independent details of design. But some of Dolley's chains seem to me rather unlikely in a Scandinavian setting; they have no indisputably Scandinavian substance: Lund may be read as London, Norway may be Norwich. Many of the place-names can only be explained by rather unlikely theories, such as the mass export to Scandinavia of English dies and/or very skilled copying of place-names from original coins. The names of English kings—Æthelred and Canute with his English title—also dominate. The series so far known further contains very few completely corrupt inscriptions. It is of course evident that they cannot belong to the official English coinage, as the weight, among other things, makes clear. It would seem reasonable to suppose that the long die-link chains, so skilfully interpreted by Dolley and his colleagues, emanate from some peripheral area of the British Isles, in association or in competition with neighbouring official English coinage. In this I associate myself to some extent with Bror Emil Hildebrand. The fact that one can detect more irregularities and corrupt letters in certain English mints than in others, especially at York, may be interpreted as a pointer in this direction.

To return to the Sigtuna coinage. The problem of dating Canute's coinage at Sigtuna is discussed in a paper by Lars O. Lagerqvist and Michael Dolley, entitled, 'The Problem of the Fleur-de-lis sceptre on the Sigtuna coins of Cnut', published in 1962. The English prototype for these interesting imitations is Canute's English *Short Cross* type (pl. 1:7) but they show certain independent deviations (frontispiece, top right, and pl. 2:4). The obverse legend reads CNUT REX SW(EORUM). The Swedish title of Canute appears already in 1027,

in his famous letter, and consequently this coin might have been struck as early as that year. Nevertheless, Dolley believes that the *Short Cross* prototype was only introduced in England in 1029, saying that this type would seem to have been known at Sigtuna and deemed fit for imitation *before* English *Small Cross* pennies can have arrived in central Sweden in any quantity.<sup>1</sup> It is as well to remember that no source states unequivocally that re-coinage took place every six years, or that intervals were always regular. This being so, and since we possess such exceptional and mutually independent sources as Canute's letter, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, the scaldic poems and the *rex sveorum* coinage, I believe that they should be used to guide us to the length of the interval between coinages rather than the other way round. Consequently I think that the *Short Cross* type must be dated earlier than 1029.

I return now to Canute's Danish coins. A coin illustrated on pl. 2:8 bears the interesting inscription EDELREDRE. The design is an imitation of Æthelred's *Helmet* type, but several details are omitted, notably part of the helmet, and the coin is considerably smaller than the normal *Helmet* coin. We may be absolutely certain that this coin is Danish in spite of Æthelred's name. It is a free Danish interpretation of his *Helmet* type, produced in the latter part of Canute's reign about twenty years after it was current in England. Two other coins (pl. 2:9-10) are similarly free imitations but bear Canute's name. One of them (pl. 2:9) reads CNUT REX IND, the other CNUT XX ANL (pl. 2:10). The reverses show crescents and dots in the angles of the cross—features quite foreign to English coins. The three coins were struck by Othencar of Lund, Grim of Lund and Braen of Viborg.

We have now arrived at Canute's last great Danish coinage, the type which carries a snake on one face. The reverse has a cross made up of arches (frontispiece, bottom, and pl. 2:11-12). Canute's first Danish coins had an average standard weight of 1.5 grams, considerably higher than contemporary English coins. His supposed Norwegian and his Swedish coinage from the 1020s have a definitely lower but not very constant standard, averaging between 1.2 and 1.3 grams. With the snake type the standard of weight becomes more stable and achieves close parity with the English standard. A

<sup>1</sup> Lagerqvist-Dolley 1962, pp. 259-60.

sample of fifty *Snake* types have a minimum weight of 0.83 and a maximum weight of 1.12 grams. This weight variation is smaller than in the English *Pointed Helmet* and *Short Cross* types. The average weight of the *Snake* type is precisely 1.0 gram, for the *Pointed Helmet* and *Short Cross* types the average weights are 1.02 and 1.07 grams respectively. With the *Snake* type greater uniformity in appearance and standard was introduced into the Danish monetary system, in much the same way as had happened in England with the introduction of the *Pointed Helmet* type some years before.

But this is something of a paradox, because the *Snake* type and another type with the same reverse are the only Danish coins of Canute which in their design lack all affinity with contemporary English types. The snake motif is indigenous and had already been used on the earliest Scandinavian coins in the ninth-century Hedeby series; it is never seen on English coins of Æthelred and Canute which always have Christian symbols. At the same time, this coin is the first with a consistent standard of weight adhering closely to the contemporary English standard. It is with this his latest coin type, which incidentally continued to be issued during the reign of Harthaknut, that Canute's Scandinavian coinage completed its evolution from a primitive to a sophisticated system of a west European kind. But this was not brought about through more skilful imitation of English types—on the contrary, it was an entirely indigenous stock of designs that was developed.

On one of the two Danish coins illustrated on pl. 2:11-12 Canute is called king of England and on the other king of Denmark; one coin was struck by Farthe and the other by Alfwine, both of Lund in Skåne. It was presumably possible to use these coins as payment without weighing them, at least if you lived in Lund. The Viking Canute was not only admitted into the civilized fraternity of Christian kings: in time he also managed to civilize some part of his Northern domains, at least where money was concerned.

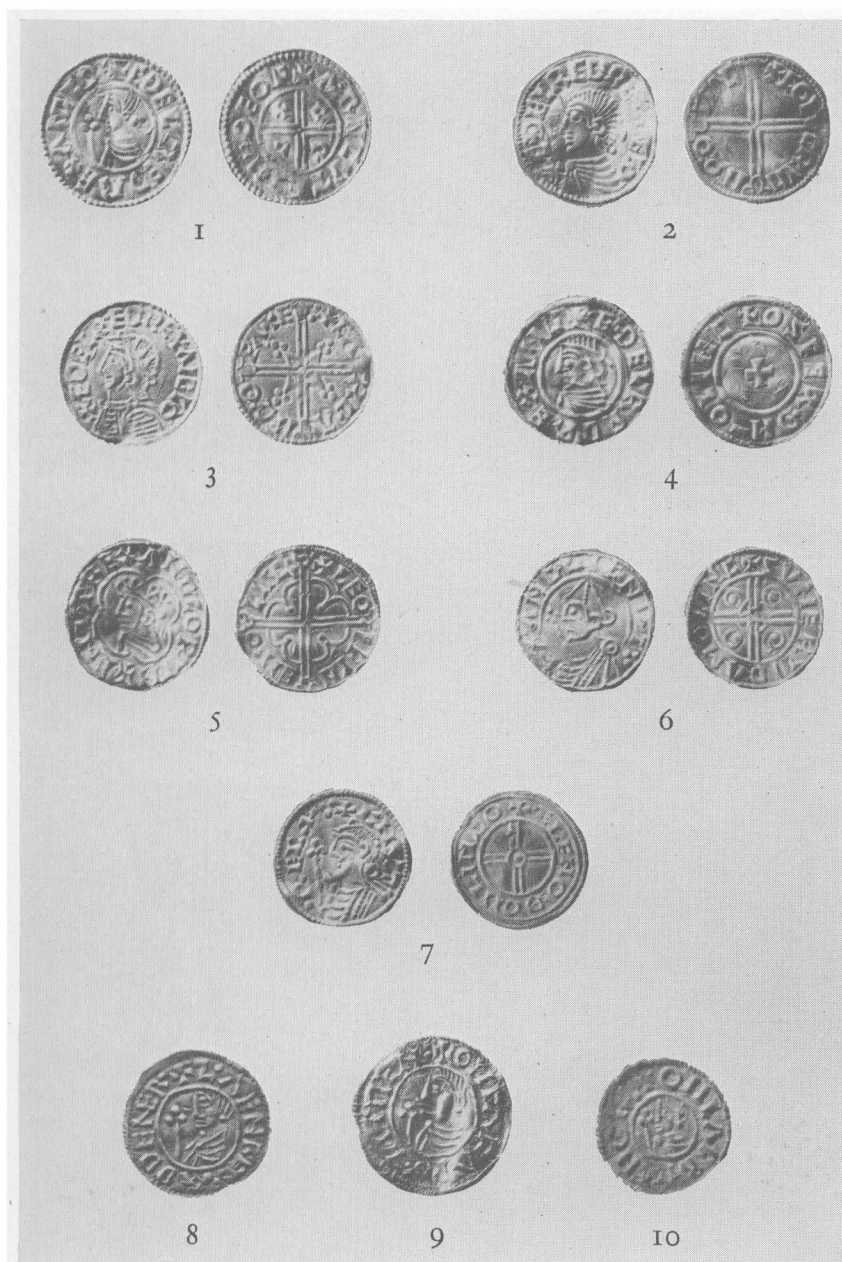
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## PLATES

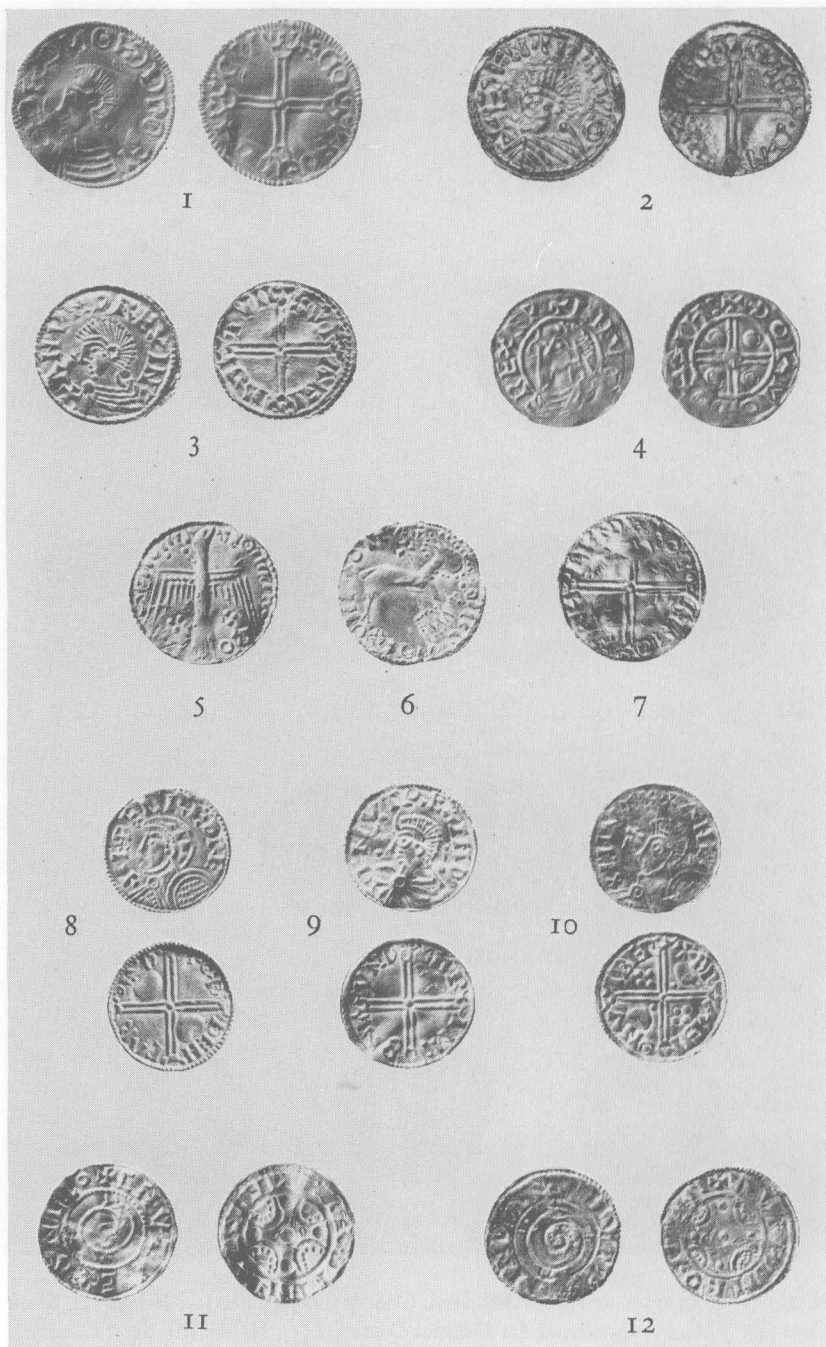






Pl. I. (a) Coin types struck for Æthelred: *Crux* (1), *Long Cross* (2), *Helmet* (3), *Small Cross* (4). (b) Coin types struck for Canute: *Quatrefoil* (5), *Helmet* (6), *Short Cross* (7). (c) The oldest Scandinavian coinage with inscriptions: Sven Forkbeard, Denmark (8), Olof Skötkonung, Sweden (9), Olaf Tryggvason, Norway (10).

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Pl. 2. (a) Scandinavian imitations with blundered legends of Æthelred's *Long Cross* type (1-2). (b) Anund Jakob, Sigtuna, Sweden (3). (c) Canute, Sigtuna, Sweden (4). (d) Imitation of Æthelred's *Agnus Dei* type (5-6), die-linked with the moneyer OBAN, Lund (7). (e) Danish coins struck for Canute by Othencar of Lund (8), Grim of Lund (9), and Braen of Viborg (10). (f) Canute's latest Danish coinage, the *Snake* type, struck by Farthe (11) and Alfwine (12), both of Lund.

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