

length Type I chain which was extensively remodelled and lengthened by the incorporation of Type II elements, but by a smith who was unaware of, or chose to ignore, Type II conventions. When this remodelling took place is hard to say. On present evidence it seems unlikely to antedate the Anglo-Saxon period. The chain was an isolated find, not part of a hoard, and implies the existence of a substantial hall. It is extremely unfortunate that gravel-extraction has destroyed traces of its context.

THE COINS

by David Sherlock*

King Beonna's coins

Burrow Hill is the first and only archaeological site to have produced more than a single example of these very rare coins. Excepting the accidentally discovered hoard of 36 from Harling (Norfolk) recently declared Treasure Trove and awaiting publication, the five Burrow Hill Beonnas have increased the number of his known coins by nearly 50%. The site has produced one new type and several different dies. These are the only Beonna coins to have come from a controlled archaeological excavation. Their importance on all these counts merits their being published although the excavation itself is not yet complete. Burrow Hill may justifiably be regarded as a type-site for these coins of a little-known King of East Anglia and provides final confirmation that they are East Anglian.

Historical Background

The two and a half centuries from the death of King Redwald to the martyrdom of King Edmund are rightly included in the "dark ages" of English history. From the riches of Redwald's ship-burial at Sutton Hoo to the legends of the killing of St. Edmund by the Danes there is a period when the history and archaeology of East Anglia is largely unknown. The "bretwaldaship", a titular and symbolic leadership recognised amongst the various English kings, which as we know from the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (EHD. 171), Redwald had won from Ethelbert, King of Kent, passed at his death to Edwin, King of Northumbria (HE II, V). Thereafter, albeit from scanty evidence, East Anglia seems to have gone into political decline, eventually to be taken over by the kingdom of Mercia during the latter part of the rule of Offa, its most powerful king (757-796).

With the exception of two short periods, Mercian supremacy over East Anglia lasted from Offa's reign until 825 when Beornwulf was killed by an East Anglian uprising. There was one period of revolt in the reign of Æthelbert who was put to death by the Mercians in 794 and later made a saint, and another possibly in the reign of Eadwald whose coins may have been minted following the death of Offa in 796 (Blunt 1961, 50). For forty-four years from 825 to 869 East Anglia was again an independent kingdom, but one increasingly weakened by incursions by the Danes who finally martyred King Edmund and overran the kingdom in 869. King Edmund became a symbol of East Anglian national fervour, with, moreover, a memorial coinage, struck and circulated in the kingdom when it was firmly under Danish rule (Blunt 1969).

From Redwald to Edmund there are approximately nineteen kings who are known to have ruled in East Anglia (three of whom shared the kingdom), giving an average length of rule of just over 14 years. There were doubtless others whose names are now lost. King Beonna occurs nearly half-way through this long period, in 758. So scanty is the history that he and a number of the other kings are known only from much later chroniclers and three of them are known only from their coins. The *Chronicon* of Florence of Worcester (*ob.* 1118) has for the year 758 "His temporibus Orientalibus Saxonibus Swithredus, Australibus Saxonibus Osmundus, Orientalibus Anglis Beorna reges praefuerunt" (Thorpe 1848, p. 57); and the *Historia Regum* attributed to Simeon of Durham (*fl.* 1130) has under A.D. 749 "Elfwald rex Orientalium Anglorum defunctus est, regnumque Hunbeanna et Alberht sibi diviserunt" (Rolls Series 75, p. 39). Assuming, partly on the evidence of Beonna's coins, that "Hunbeanna" is in fact two kings (EHD 240, n. 9) these references tell us only of Beonna's *floruit* and that the kingdom was divided between himself, Hun and Alberht. The effect of thus dividing an area about the size of the modern counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire in the year after Offa's accession may have been to weaken the kingdom and hasten the coming supremacy of Mercia. Nevertheless, no coins are known from his contemporaries, Hun and Alberht,²⁷ so Beonna is the first King of East Anglia whose name appears on coinage and the coins themselves occupy a special place in the development of the coinage of England.

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