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READING THE INSCRIPTIONS ON THE YORK GROUP OF ANGLO-SAXON GOLD SHILLINGS

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The main purpose of this paper is to offer a new reading (indeed, the only complete reading) of the inscription on the reverse of varieties Bii and Ci of the so-called York group of seventh-century Anglo-Saxon gold shillings.[1] There are four main varieties within this group, of which two – A and D – do not bear any inscription at all, while the other two – B and C – bear a reverse inscription alone. These varieties can themselves be divided into a number of sub-types, so that variety B contains sub-types Bi and Bii and variety C contains sub-types Ci, Cii, and Ciii. They seem to display four different inscriptions in total. Bi displays one type of inscription, Bii and Ci display a second type of inscription, Cii displays a third type, and Ciii a fourth type. In each case, the inscription surrounds a small cross within a central circle. It is impossible to transcribe the inscription on Bi in full because the only example is rather worn and was struck on an irregular flan, so that large parts of the inscription are missing.[2] However, one example of Bii survives and nine examples of Ci (Figure 1), where several of these are in excellent condition and have been almost centrally struck on good, full flans. The result is that it is possible to transcribe this inscription in full with very little uncertainty about the nature of any of the forms contained therein. Two examples of Cii survive, one having been centrally struck on a full flan, so that there can be little doubt about the contents of its inscription either. Finally, five examples of Ciii survive, and one preserves just enough of the inscription to allow it to be recognised as a probable variation of the inscription on Cii, even if two or three of the letters are not entirely clear.

The inscriptions have not lacked attention in recent years as more examples of these coins have been discovered and published, but the inscription on varieties Bii and Ci has generally been dismissed as too corrupt to be properly read, if it was accepted that it had any real meaning at all. On the basis of the three examples of Ci known to him, Sutherland concluded that the legend on these coins seemed to be 'a mere congeries of letter-forms, quite devoid of sense', although he did concede that 'the individual characters are clearly engraved and reasonably well proportioned'.[3] Indeed, he even went so far as to speculate that these coins were poor imitations of a 'lost prototype' with 'reverse legend comprising some form of the words EBORACVM CIVITAS'. However, this was no more than a guess based on the apparent find-spot in York of the three examples known to him. His transcription of their legend ran as follows (Figure 2).[4]



Fig. 1. York Shilling, variety Ci (12 mm, 1.22 g): EMC 2008.0432; *SCBI* 69, no. 6; Abramson 2019, corpus no. 11 (twice actual size; courtesy of Tony Abramson)

Unfortunately, this seriously misrepresents a couple of the forms, as will become clearer shortly. Grierson reached a similar conclusion to Sutherland when he described these coins as 'a jumble of letters which in fact

[1] For a full catalogue of the known examples of the York group of gold shillings, see Abramson 2019, 14–17. Blackburn 1994 first divided the few specimens then known into varieties A, B, and C according to the apparent evolution of the obverse design. Naylor and Allen 2014 then dubbed the next new variety D, despite the fact that the obverse is clearly more closely related to that of varieties A or B than C.

[2] Blackburn 1994, 206, presents as full a transcription as seems possible.

[3] Sutherland 1948, 50.

[4] Sutherland 1948, 94.

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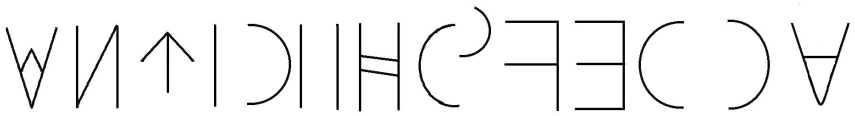


Fig. 2. Transcription by Sutherland 1948 of the reverse legend on varieties Bii and Ci

were meaningless', although he did not attempt a transcription.[5] Metcalf thought much the same, referring to 'a long garbled legend in which both runes and Latin letters can be recognized'.[6] He did not attempt a transcription either. Blackburn repeated their judgements when he described the inscriptions on both the Bi variety and on the Bii and Ci varieties as 'thoroughly garbled'.[7] Nevertheless, he did attempt a transcription of the legend on the Bii and Ci varieties that varied somewhat from that of Sutherland, running as follows (Figure 3):

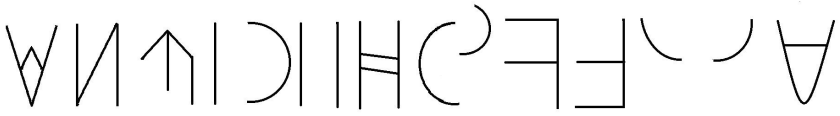


Fig. 3. Transcription by Blackburn 1994 of the reverse legend on varieties Bii and Ci

More recently, Gannon provided a new transcription differing somewhat from those of both Sutherland and Blackburn.[8] However, although she did not specifically dismiss it as meaningless, she did not attempt to read it in whole or part. Her transcription runs as follows (Figure 4):



Fig. 4. Transcription by Gannon 2013 of the reverse legend on varieties Bii and Ci

This also seriously misrepresents some of the forms, and even omits one (the tenth in the transcriptions by Sutherland and Blackburn) altogether. Finally, Naismith briefly dismissed this inscription as a 'pseudo-legend' in his recent magisterial treatment of the medieval coinage of Britain and Ireland.[9]

It is important at this point, therefore, to provide a more accurate transcription of the inscription. Here one notes that Sutherland, Blackburn and Gannon all read this inscription in a clock-wise direction about the central circle. Furthermore, Blackburn and Gannon seem simply to follow Sutherland in their choice of where to begin the transcription (the letter A at the 5 o'clock position on the reverse of Figure 1), although Sutherland does not provide any explanation of why he chooses to begin his transcription at this particular point. Nevertheless, if one follows them in reading the legend in this manner, and begins at the same point that they do, then the transcription should probably read as follows (Figure 5):[10]

[5] Grierson 1962, 9.
[6] Metcalf 1993, 50.
[7] Blackburn 1994, 206.
[8] Gannon 2013, commentary to Pl. 1, no. 16. Unfortunately, however, the photograph on the plate does not depict the correct coin. It depicts a gold shilling of the 'Two Emperors' type, the same coin as depicted at Pl. 2, no, 24 subsequently.
[9] Naismith 2017, 54.
[10] I make no effort either to represent the globular terminals at the end of most lines or to preserve the precise angles of lines as they intersect. Such a level of detail is not necessary for the basic identification of the letters.



Fig. 5. Proposed new transcription of the reverse legend on varieties Bii and Ci following traditional sequence

The two most important differences between this transcription and the earlier transcriptions, whose significance will become clearer later, are that the fourth form in the above sequence is recognised as a retrograde Latin capital L rather than as an I and that the final (fifteenth) form is recognised as a retrograde Latin capital D rather than as an A. The reason why earlier commentators such as Sutherland and Blackburn misinterpreted this D as an A was simply that this form did not survive in full on the specimens then available to them, but four recent discoveries do preserve it in full and put its identity as a D beyond reasonable doubt.[11] Accordingly, Abramson recognises it as a D in the publication of his collection.[12] Similarly, the L seems clearly identifiable as such rather than an I on more recent discoveries.[13]

While the majority of forms are clearly identifiable as Roman letters, even if retrograde or inverted, there is room for doubt sometimes, most obviously in the case of the eighth form in the above sequence. On the one hand, it vaguely resembles a Latin capital letter H. However, the presence of two bars across and the fact that the uprights are not in parallel, but either converge or diverge depending on where one considers the top to be, prevent this identification. On the other hand, it also resembles the h-letter *hægl* in the Anglo-Saxon runic alphabet (ᚺ). Yet the fact that the two bars run straight across from one upright to the other rather than diagonally and that the uprights converge or diverge rather than run in strict parallel tells against this identification also. Of course, the convergence or divergence of the uprights may be due to the difficulty in engraving this legend in a small circle, since the uprights of the letter N diverge in the same way (although it remains clearly identifiable as a Latin capital letter N, so I have transcribed it as such). Nevertheless, the other difficulties remain, so that this form is probably best treated as a corruption of some unidentifiable letter. Similarly, one could perhaps argue that the ninth and tenth forms above resemble the j-letter *jera* in the proto-Germanic runic alphabet (ᛃ) when taken together. However, there is no evidence that this particular form was used in Anglo-Saxon England.[14] It is more likely rather that two different letters have been rather clumsily crammed together, not least because the same forms occur separately elsewhere within the inscription.

So what does this inscription actually mean? Pirie thought that it contained the Latin name ECGFRIDVS, that is, that it named King Ecgfrith of Northumbria (670–85), but this reading rests on a misinterpretation of several of the forms and has won no support since.[15] Furthermore, as even she herself admitted, this reading left a group of letters that she could not properly explain, although she did speculate that they might represent 'the beginning of a Latin verb'. The most recent attempt to read something meaningful into this inscription occurred when a cataloguer claimed that he could identify the Latin word SANCTE 'O Holy (one)!' within it.[16] However, he did so by reading the inscription in an anti-clockwise direction, beginning with the ninth form in the above transcriptions, so that he read a sequence of forms as follows (Figure 6).



Fig. 6. Partial transcription of the reverse legend on varieties Bii and Ci by Spink cataloguer

There is admittedly a vague resemblance to the Latin SANCTE, but no more than that. Unfortunately, none of the forms actually matches the Latin letter that it is

[11] See Abramson 2019, corpus nos 11 (found 2008), 12 (found 2004), 14 (found 2017), 15 (found 2016).
[12] Abramson 2018, commentary upon nos 6–7.
[13] See Abramson 2019, corpus nos 10 (before 1846), 11 (found 2008), 13 (published 2015), 15 (found 2016).
[14] Parsons 1999, 87.
[15] Pirie 1992, 15.
[16] See Spink Auction 26 March 2015, lot 505. Abramson 2019, 1, 9, identifies the cataloguer as Jonathan Mann.

supposed to represent very well. More importantly, no attempt at reading this inscription can be persuasive unless it provides a proper reading of the whole inscription. The cataloguer proceeded to claim that it was possible that the rest of the inscription contained 'a slightly blundered version of the same Latin rendering', which he wished to read as SAACTE, but this is frankly impossible. Even Abramson, who does accept the cataloguer's reading of the initial Latin SANCTE in the inscription, does not accept his further SAACTE. In his catalogue of his own collection, he reads the full inscription as SANCTE VIA D CↃ EFV, but does not attempt to explain what this means or provide a translation into English.[17] The sequence VIA certainly forms a real Latin word, meaning 'way', but Abramson misinterprets a retrograde letter N in order to provide the V and I in that. Accordingly, in his subsequent catalogue of and discussion of the whole group of York shillings, he corrects this reading to SANCTEИADCↃEFV instead, although he does not elaborate on what this means.[18] He merely refers the reader to an unpublished lecture by Dr Mary Garrison wherein she apparently interpreted the legend as 'a divine benediction on York in the style of *nomina sacra* involving the abbreviation of certain references'.[19] This is all very vague, however, and does not properly explain how the various letter forms contributed to this benediction, or what these references were.

Any fresh attempt to read this inscription must begin by explaining its methodology. In this case, I will start by assuming that whoever struck this coin probably wanted to produce something that seemed comparable to and, therefore, as acceptable as the large number of Merovingian *tremisses* of the so-called 'National Series' that were circulating widely within England during the first half of the seventh century, to the extent that they outnumbered Anglo-Saxon gold coins by almost four to one.[20] Clearly, he did not intend this new coin in slavish imitation of one particular Merovingian type, but these coins did provide the obvious models as far as the general conventions of content and presentation were concerned. Accordingly, he would probably have wanted any inscription to proceed in a clock-wise direction about the coin in the normal manner of a Merovingian *tremissis*. This is not to ignore the fact that some coins or medals of this approximate period did display inscriptions that ran in an anti-clockwise manner. For example, the inscription on the obverse of the unique medal struck in the name of bishop Liudhard, probably at Canterbury in Kent in *c*.580, ran in an anti-clockwise manner.[21] However, this was an exception to the rule. Furthermore, he would probably have wanted this inscription to convey some of the same sort of information that one would normally read on a standard Merovingian *tremissis* of the 'National Series' type. This is important because these coins conveyed a very limited amount of information. The inscription on the obverse normally named the place where the coin had been struck, while the inscription on the reverse normally named the moneyer (*monetarius*) responsible. Furthermore, the moneyer was normally identified as such by the abbreviation MONET, or something similar, while many examples also include some form of the Latin verb *facere* 'to make', whether FIT 'It is made' (Fig. 7), FITVR 'It is made', FECIT 'He made', or FACIT 'He makes.[22] Of course, when a passive form of the verb was used, it



Fig. 7. Tremissis of Quentovic, moneyer Anglus (12 mm, 1.23 g); Belfort no. 4966. Obverse legend: + VVICCO FIT; Reverse legend: AИGLO MOИЄT. Ex CNG, Auction 100 (7 October 2015), lot 2084 (twice actual size; courtesy of Classical Numismatic Group, LLC)

[17] Abramson 2018, commentary upon nos 6–7.

[18] Abramson 2019, 5, although he incorrectly attributes this inscription to variety Bi.

[19] Abramson 2019, 9–10.

[20] For a catalogue of such finds, see Abdy and Williams 2006, 44–55. For further analysis, see Metcalf 2014.

[21] Sutherland 1948, no. 1. The inscription on the reverse seems to be symmetrical about the central cross rather than intended to be read in one direction alone. In general, see Werner 1991.

[22] For the term FIT, see e.g. Belfort nos 1706–8, 1713 (Moûtiers en Tarentaise); nos 1760–1805 (Dorestat); nos 3766–72 (Rheims); nos 4952–59, 4965–66 (Quentovic). For FITVR, see e.g. Belfort nos 3778, 3785 (Rheims); no. 3820 (Rouen). For FICIT (= FECIT), see e.g. Belfort nos 4967–73 (Quentovic). For FECET (= FECIT), see e.g. Belfort no. 3869 (Rodez). For FACIT, see e.g. Belfort nos 1689, 1691–93 (Moûtiers en Tarentaise).

occurred on the obverse with the name of the place where the minting had occurred, but if an active form of the verb was used, it occurred on the reverse with the name of the moneyer.

While the inscription under discussion has clearly been corrupted to some extent in that some apparent letter forms are retrograde or inverted, and two forms in particular bear a weak resemblance to any letter at all, it is not necessarily gibberish. Perhaps the best way to approach it is to read it in a clock-wise direction in search of clear sequences of letters that may represent parts of the sorts of words that one might expect to find on a Merovingian *tremissis*, a personal name, a place-name, or some form of the verb *facere*. It is noteworthy, therefore, that it seems to contain the sequence FEC (the eleventh to thirteenth forms in my transcription above), the perfect stem of the verb *facere*, as if it contains the verb FECIT 'He made', or some abbreviation thereof. However, if it contains this verb, then it should probably contain the name of the person who is the subject of this verb also. As one continues to read it in a clockwise direction, one quickly discovers the sequence DAN (the fifteenth, first, and second forms in my transcription), all letters in retrograde, followed by what appears to be a form of E and a retrograde L, to produce the sequence DANEL, which appears to represent a slight misspelling of the name *Daniel* in Latin, which, like most Hebrew names, was normally treated as indeclinable during the early medieval period. Hence the inscription appears to claim that a certain Daniel made something. But what did he make? The obvious assumption is that this statement refers to the coin itself, so that one naturally expects that the remaining portion of the inscription should contain some accusative form of the demonstrative pronoun *hic/haec/hoc* 'this', very likely the singular neuter accusative *hoc*. And the evidence seems to support this. Two vertical lines (the sixth and seventh forms) which may preserve a slightly corrupt Latin capital letter H are followed two forms later by a C (ninth form). That leaves the intervening form to represent a corrupt Latin capital O. Certainly, one would not easily guess that this was a corrupt O from a simple observation of its shape, although it does at least enclose some space like an O. However, this form remains highly problematic no matter how one tries to read the inscription because, as already indicated above, it is not readily identifiable with any letter in either the Latin or runic alphabets.

If the inscription does contain three sequences seeming to suggest that a certain Daniel made 'this', the fact that normal Latin word-order requires that the grammatical subject should occur first, the object second, and the verb last, means that the sequence identified as HOC should occur between the sequences DANEL and FEC. The fact that the apparent HOC does indeed occur in this position reinforces the interpretation just offered. Furthermore, because Latin word-order requires that the subject should normally occur first before the object or the verb, one can now identify the beginning of the inscription and transcribe it accordingly, as follows (Figure 8):



Fig. 8. Proposed new transcription of the reverse legend on varieties Bii and Ci from newly identified beginning

The sequences identified as DANEL, HOC, and FEC explain all but three of the apparent letter forms in this transcription. So what does one make of these last three unexplained forms (the sixth, eleventh, and fifteenth in Figure 8)? Two curious coincidences are immediately noticeable. The first is that these three forms are all identical, all consisting of the same form. These have traditionally been transcribed as if they were retrograde examples of the Latin letter C. However, they do not form gentle curves in the manner of the forms at the end of the apparent sequences HOC and FEC, which almost certainly do represent the letter C, but are far more angular in appearance. Hence it seems unlikely that they also represent the same letter C. The second is that they all seem to occur in the same position, that is, in the space between one word and the next, between DANEL and HOC, between HOC and FEC, and between FEC and DANEL. One can hardly avoid the conclusion, therefore, that this arrow-

shaped form serves to mark the end of one word and the beginning of the next, that is, that it performs the same function as a space between one word and the next in a modern text. Furthermore, the fact the 'arrow' points in the same direction in each case, in the direction that the inscription was supposed to be read, encourages the idea that it may have been intended to perform this function also.

The use of this arrow-shaped form as a space-marker seems to be without precedent at this period.[23] In her study of the development of word separation in Anglo-Saxon inscriptions, Okasha notes nothing similar.[24] The majority of surviving inscriptions from Anglo-Saxon England during the seventh to ninth centuries display unseparated text, that is, text that does not use any means at all to distinguish one word from the next, and the few inscriptions that do distinguish the words from each other do so by inserting crosses and/or dots between them. Here one notes that an example of the use of dots to mark a division between one word and the next seems to occur within the inscription on the reverse of the Cii variety of York gold shilling. It includes two large dots, one above the other, immediately before the retrograde letters DE, and this has generally been taken to indicate the beginning of the inscription. Furthermore, three large dots, one above the other, seem to perform the same function also in the case of the inscription on the reverse of the Ciii variety. However, the sheer length of the inscriptions on both the Cii and Ciii varieties suggest that they probably contain more than one word and that more dots should have been used to mark other spaces also if this convention was being consistently applied. In these cases, therefore, the dots seem to have been used to mark the beginning of the inscriptions alone rather than all of the divisions between the words, perhaps because it seemed more useful to have a single marker identifying the beginning of the inscription as a whole than three markers identifying the beginning of individual words, but not the beginning of the inscription itself.[25] This assumes, of course, that those who inserted these dots were able to read the legend and recognise where one word ended and the next began, which need not have been the case at all, as will be seen later.

So who was this Daniel who was claiming responsibility for the striking of the Bii and Ci varieties of gold shilling? Unfortunately, he does not seem to be identifiable with any known historical figure. The early recorded person of this name within Anglo-Saxon society was the bishop of Winchester (*c*.705–44) who acted as one of the sources for Bede in the composition of his ecclesiastical history.[26] However, Daniel was a good biblical name, the name of the eponymous hero of the book of Daniel within the Old Testament. It is not unlikely, therefore, that there were some other earlier Daniels, even if the name never became very popular. The problem here lies rather in the paucity of the surviving sources for this period and their narrow focus on the very highest echelons of society, kings, bishops, and so on. So Daniel was probably a moneyer of similar social status to the numerous moneyers named on contemporary Merovingian coinage for whom there is no other evidence except their coins. Furthermore, as the distribution map of finds compiled by Abramson suggests, he was probably based in or about York: recent finds have not changed this assumption.[27] He may not have been Anglo-Saxon, of course, but may have emigrated from Gaul to England due to the demand for his skills. Whatever the case, even if Williams is correct in dating the so-called York group of shillings to the late 620s or early 630s, Daniel is probably not the earliest named moneyer known to have operated in England.[28] That honour probably goes to the Eusebius who struck

[23] It is vaguely reminiscent of the Roman use of triangular shaped interpuncts to separate words in many of their inscriptions, to the extent that one wonders whether the engraver may have been influenced by his knowledge of such inscriptions.

[24] Okasha 2003.

[25] One should note here also that the obverse inscription on the Liudhard medal includes three large pellets whose function is not clear. One does occur between the Latin name LEVDARDVS and the abbreviation EPS, so between two words, but the other two occur within the name LEVDARDVS itself. The fact that the three pellets divide the inscription into four equal groups of three letters each may suggest that they were being used to number the letters for some reason. Whatever the case, there is no comparison to the use of the arrow-shaped forms in the inscription under discussion, since they divide it into groups of five letters, three (perhaps four) letters, and three letters.

[26] The PASE (Prosopography of Anglo-Saxon England) database (pase.ac.uk) lists only four Daniels between the seventh and tenth centuries, the bishop of Winchester being the first.

[27] Abramson 2019, 7.

[28] See Williams and Hook 2013, 61 and 68.

shillings at Canterbury, but he certainly vies with moneyer Witmen who probably operated somewhere in Kent during the 630s, perhaps at Canterbury also, for second place among the select group of the earliest named moneyers known to have operated in England.[29]

The recognition that the moneyer who struck the Bii and Ci varieties of gold shilling attributed to York was named Daniel requires a brief return also to the thorny problem posed by the scene depicted on the obverse of the coins of the C variety in particular.[30] This scene depicts the head and shoulders of a figure above a broad cross-hatched area with a large cross hovering just above this cross-hatched area to either side of him. Unfortunately, it has no obvious precedent or parallel. Abramson prefers to interpret it as the depiction of 'a standing episcopal figure behind a stone wall, possibly a representation of a church'.[31] However, there is nothing at all to indicate that the figure is a bishop rather than some other type of holy man and the cross-hatched area is far too simple to represent a church. Blackburn raised the possibility that the two crosses on either side of the figure might be altar crosses, in which case the cross-hatched area below 'might then be interpreted as a stone altar on which the crosses stand, and behind which a cleric (Paulinus?) faces the congregation'.[32] Yet the crosses do not actually sit upon the cross-hatched area but float slightly above it. The identification of the moneyer as Daniel raises a new possibility, that he chose to depict a scene from the adventures of his namesake, the prophet Daniel, upon the obverse instead. Perhaps the most famous of Daniel's adventures was when the king of Babylon had him thrown into a pit of lions, but from which he was subsequently released unharmed because God had protected him (*Dan*. 6.16–23). Accordingly, early medieval art normally depicted Daniel standing between two lions with his arms raised in prayer to God.[33] The wall of the pit or enclosure was not always shown, but when it was shown, it was depicted as column-like structures to either side of Daniel, as if the artist was attempting to present a cross-sectional view of the pit. More importantly here, such structures rarely reached above Daniel's shoulders, so that his head and neck normally appeared to rise well above the pit (Figure 9).

It is possible, therefore, that the obverse preserves a simple attempt to depict the same event, that is, that it depicts Daniel's head and neck sticking up above the wall surrounding the pit into which he has been thrown, where the cross-hatched area represents the wall. Of course, the absence of the lions would not have made the identification of this scene easy, but the occurrence of Daniel's name on the reverse of the coin would have provided an important pointer in the right direction, initially at least. As for the two crosses floating on either side of the figure, they simply serve to indicate that this figure was a holy man.[34] The use of floating crosses in this way was an entirely generic device, and any resemblance to the standard portrayal of Justinian I on his copper coinage as has sometimes been highlighted is entirely coincidental.[35]

[29] For Eusebius, see Sutherland 1948, no. 2; for Witmen, see Sutherland 1948, no. 57. However, some commentators such as Arent Pol (*pers. comm*. 8 Jan. 2020) have doubts concerning the authenticity of the coin attributed to Eusebius on the basis of its style, particularly the style of its lettering.

[30] The scene on the obverse of the York shillings evolved from the depiction of an almost full figure holding a cross in each hand to either side of him (varieties Ai, Aii, D, Bi, Bii) to the depiction of the head and shoulders of a figure rising above a broad cross-hatched area (Ci, Cii, Ciii). However, the obvious evolution of one scene from the other does not mean that they necessarily depict the same scene or figure. Furthermore, the fact that the broad cross-hatched area developed on the obverse at or about the same time as the introduction of the inscription on the reverse, an inscription with some well-cut letters, renders it difficult to dismiss its development as a crude blunder based on some misunderstanding of the figure's robes rather than an intentional adaptation of the older design. Note also that the standing figure with cross in each hand was a common motif on silver sceattas subsequently. See Gannon 2003, 87–93.

[31] Abramson 2019, 8.

[32] Blackburn 1994, 208.

[33] See e.g. Weitzmann 1979, nos 371, 377, 386–7, 436.

[34] For example, as Gannon 2003, 90–1, drew attention to in this context, the flasks produced at the great pilgrimage site at Abu Mina in Egypt during the sixth to eighth centuries often depicted St Menas standing between two crosses 'floating' just above his shoulders on either side of him. Similarly, the obverse of the lead seals struck in the name of the Byzantine emperors during the sixth to eighth centuries typically depicted the Mother of God standing between two 'floating' crosses. See Nesbitt 2009, nos 6.1–22.3, 24.1–28.2. For a sixth-century gold medallion, now lost, depicting Daniel standing between two lions with crosses 'floating' to either side of his head, see Volbach 1922, 83–4. For a similar lead seal of the same period, see Nomos AG, Obolos 14 (15 Dec. 2019), lot 651.

[35] Sutherland 1948, 50.



Fig. 9. Scene from an ivory pyxis (fifth to sixth century) depicting Daniel enclosed by wall of pit (© Dumbarton Oaks, Byzantine Collection, Washington, DC; accession no. BZ.1936.22)

Finally, one must now comment on the implications of the above reading of the inscription on the Bii and Ci varieties for the reading of the inscriptions on the Cii and Ciii varieties also. Abramson transcribes the inscription on the Cii variety (Figure 10) as follows (Figure 11).[36]



Fig. 10. York Shilling, variety Cii (12 mm, 1.29g). Ex Dix Noonan Webb Auction 12 December 2016, lot 2151 (courtesy of Dix Noonan Webb)

Abramson reads this as PAOLIENVS EP, which ought to be corrected to PAVLINVS EP, in reference to Paulinus, the first bishop of York *c*.625–33. However, there are two problems with this reading. The first problem is that he reads the inscription in an anti-clockwise direction to produce this transcription. This is problematic because the above reading of the inscription on the Bii and Ci varieties supports what general practice ought to have already suggested, that is, that the inscriptions on the York shillings had probably been intended to be read in a clockwise direction. The second problem is that the letter that he reads as a P in order to obtain EP in abbreviation of *episcopus* 'bishop' is actually a D. Hence the transcription of the inscription ought more properly to run as in Figure 12.



Fig. 11. Transcription by Abramson 2019 of the reverse legend on variety Cii



Fig. 12. Proposed new transcription of the reverse legend on variety Cii

[36] Abramson 2019, 10.

Two possibilities immediately suggest themselves as one attempts to read this legend. On the one hand, the initial two forms – D and E, both retrograde – may spell the Latin preposition *de* 'from', in which case the rest of the inscription – LVNEHOVP? – should probably spell a place-name. One finds a similar use of the preposition *de* about the mid-eighth century when a mint at London produced sceattas bearing the obverse legend DE LVNDONIA 'from London'.[37] Here one notes that the inscription on the Ciii variety seems to spell the apparent place-name slightly differently, but the reading of the two or three letters immediately following the preposition DE remains unclear, so a full comparison remains impossible. Unfortunately, however, LVNEHOVP does not resemble the name of any known Anglo-Saxon settlement, although this is not particularly suspicious since Anglo-Saxon coins eventually preserve the names of over thirty mints of uncertain location.[38] On the other hand, it is hard to ignore the fact that there are very strong similarities between the inscription on varieties Bii and Ci and that on variety Cii in particular (Figure 13).

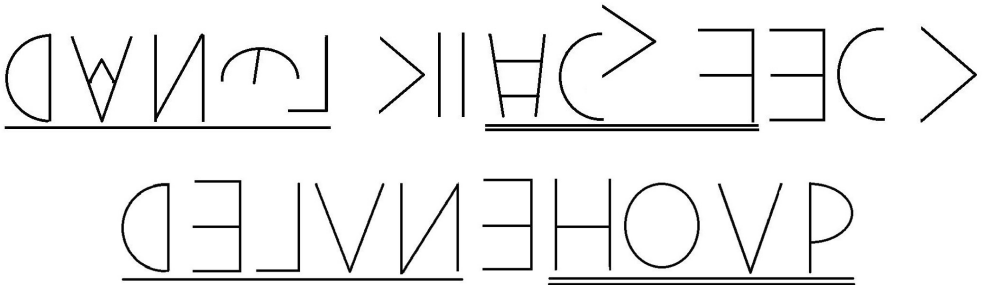


Fig. 13. Comparison of transcription of the reverse legend on varieties Bii and Ci (above) with a transcription of the reverse legend on variety Cii (below)

For example, the sequence apparently spelling DANEL in the inscription on varieties Bii and Ci bears a striking resemblance to that apparently spelling DELVN in the inscription on variety Cii (underlined once), while the last two letters of the apparent second word in the inscription on varieties Bii and Ci seem to have combined with the arrow-headed word-separator between the second and third words and the first letter of the third word to produce HOVP in the inscription on variety Cii (underlined twice). In other words, it seems very likely that the inscription on variety Cii is no more than a corrupt copy of the inscription on varieties Bii and Ci, while the inscription on variety Ciii takes this corruption a stage further even. The process here is quite like that which occurs in the case of the roughly contemporaneous Witmen group of coins in southern England where an original literate reverse legend declaring Witmen to be the moneyer was corrupted almost beyond recognition subsequently on the types now described as 'Witmen-derived 1' and 'Witmen-derived 2'.[39]

In conclusion, it has been argued that the inscription on varieties Bii and Ci of the York gold shillings is neither a pseudo-legend nor so horribly corrupt that it cannot be read. It seems to preserve a short Latin statement, DAN(*i*)EL HOC FEC(*it*) 'Daniel made this', where this Daniel is presumably the moneyer responsible for the striking of these coins, but remains otherwise unknown. The reading of this legend was complicated somewhat by the corrupt form of some of the letters and, more significantly, by the use of an otherwise unattested form to mark the separation of the three words within it. The identification of Daniel as the person responsible for the striking of these coins also raises the possibility that the figure depicted on their obverse may be the prophet Daniel peering over the top of the pit into which he has been thrown. However, the similarities between the inscription on varieties Bii and Ci and those on varieties Cii and Ciii suggest that the latter represent no more than different stages in the corruption of the former.

[37] Series L, Type 12. See e.g. *SCBI* 63, nos 524–5.
[38] Naismith 2017, 346–51.
[39] See Gannon 2013, 90–1; Naismith 2017, 52.

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