

Author: Fiona Lynne McNally

Student Number: 090392746

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Project Supervisor: Dr Scott Ashley

Aims

- To research the surviving connections between Anglo-Saxon Northumbria and the Late-Antique World.
- To research the Anglo-Saxon Northumbria of the Venerable Bede.
- To track Medieval Trade Routes and show evidence of continued international trade to Northumbria during the 'Dark Ages'.
- To find evidence of other artefacts which have travelled along these trade routes to Anglo-Saxon England.



An eighth-century copy of the Venerable Bede's 'Ecclesiastical History of the English People', probably made within a generation of his death. *Cotton Tiberius A XIV, f.26v*

Manuscripts

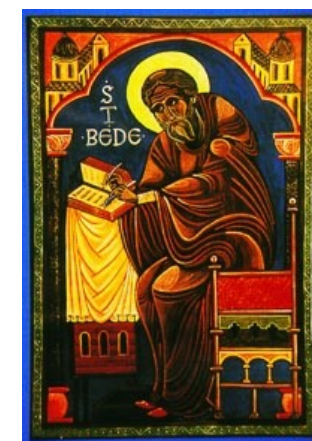
- On the day that Bede died he was working on translating a copy of a work by Isidore of Seville into Anglo-Saxon.
- Many Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts are copied from older European manuscripts. The use of continental exemplars means that classical learning was preserved in texts such as 10th century translation of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* from the Cotton manuscript Otho A.vi.
- The Phoenix* from the Exeter Book has been argued by some historians to be an allegory of the *De ave phoenice* by Lacantius.



The Lindisfarne Gospels, an eighth-century manuscript in which calligraphy is combined with intricate decoration. *Cotton Nero D IV, f.139*

Death of Bede

- This passage was the influence was for Vacation Scholarship—taken from a letter sent from Bede's adherent Cuthbert to Cuthwin.
- "I have a few treasures in my box, some **pepper**, and [silk] **napkins** and some **incense**."
- This passage raised the question of how such an exotic range of artefacts came to be in Anglo-Saxon Northumbria. Historiographical understanding (the Pirenne Thesis) states that in the 'Dark Ages' such objects should not have travelled so far. Image of Bede taken from Bede's World.



Incense

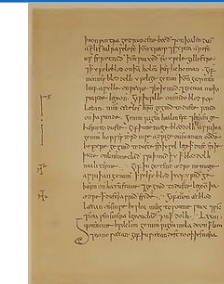
- Incense travelled from the Middle East.
- Other examples of finds from the Middle East before the 7th century were found in the Sutton Hoo burial. This find included Amethyst Beads, a Coptic Bronze Bowl and a great quantity of Byzantine silver. Image of Sutton Hoo Helmet from the British Museum Collection.



Image of Sutton Hoo Helmet from the British Museum Collection.

Pepper

- Pepper came from India.
- Sometime before 685 Aldhelm composed a riddle to which the answer was Pepper - this riddle was composed for a general audience and proved that many people must have a knowledge of Pepper.
- Pepper appears in Bald's Leechbook in more than 30 recipes. Cockayne, Oswald *Leechdoms, Wortcunning and Starcraft of Early England*.



Silk

- The silk road is one of the most famous trade routes of the ancient world.
- Silk also appears in the medical text from the 9th century; Bald's Leechbook—the British Library Manuscript Royal 12, D xvii
- The picture to the left shows the remains of the casket of St Cuthbert, he was buried in a Byzantine Silk shroud. Picture taken from the treasures of St Cuthbert Exhibition at Durham Cathedral.



Historiography

- The period from the 4th century to the 11th century is often referred to as 'Europe's Dark Ages'.
- The **Pirenne Thesis** maintains that Europe's 'Dark Ages' were a direct result of the collapse of the Roman Empire. Pirenne argues that early-medieval Europe's economy became stagnant and eventually regressed due to the loss of the Roman Trade Routes and the income generated through intercontinental trade.



Map of the 'barbarian' invasions which caused the fall of Rome. <http://newhistories.group.shef.ac.uk/wordpress/>



<http://www.public.iastate.edu/~ccford/342worldhistoryearly.html>

Tales of Travellers

The table to the right shows the number of sources from early medieval Europe which describe the journeys of travellers. Of the surviving sources 5 are in Anglo-Saxon, showing that there is documented evidence of international visitors. Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce A.D. 300-900 by Michael McCormick

Languages of sources documenting travelers

Language	Number	Percentage
Latin	450	67
Greek	108	16
Latin and Greek	73	11
Arabic	12	2
Old Church Slavonic	6	1
Old Church Slavonic and Latin	6	1
Old English and Latin	5	1
Hebrew	5	1
Georgian	4	1
Total	669	100

International Trade

This table shows international coin finds across medieval Europe. A horde of coins found in Croydon buried c.872 contained Abbasid coins as well as Byzantine coins. This horde of coins shows the international nature of trade in Anglo-Saxon England. Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce A.D. 300-900 by Michael McCormick

ARAB AND BYZANTINE COINS AROUND CAROLINGIAN EUROPE

TABLE 12.2
Viking group: Arab dirhams, arranged by find types and date (Maps 12.1 and 20.1)

Find*	Date	Mint	Quantity	Other coins
Muizen (A27)	c. 867	Arminiya	1	72 Carol. d. (unknown loss); jewelry
Croydon (A13)	c. 872	Abbasid, Balkh?, ?	3	175 Anglo-Saxon pennies, 7 Carol. d.; c. 70 coins lost; ingots; hack-silver; 1 Byzantine?
Odoorn (A30)	c. 895	?	2	1 dirham mounted; unknown number of Carol. d. (including from Italy); silver rings
Haithabu (A20)	c. 904	al Shash, Baghdad, Samanid	14	
Cuerdale (A14)	c. 905	al Banjhir, Andarabah, al Andalus, Arminiya, Baghdad, Bardha'ah, uncertain Abbasid, imitation Abbasid	36	c. 7,000 Anglo-Saxon, Arab, Byzantine, Carolingian and Viking coins, silver ingots and hack-silver
Domburg (A15)	after 821	Isfahan	1	
Domburg (A15)	after 866	Dvin	1	
Winchester (A42)	after 900	Samarqand	1	

Conclusions

- The commonly accepted Pirenne theory suggests that international trade was a rarity in Europe's 'Dark Ages'.
- This research concludes that international trade with Anglo-Saxon Northumbria continued to thrive as Northumbria was one of Europe's great seats of learning.

Map of Europe in 814 (At the Death of Charles the Great). The Public Schools Historical Atlas by Charles Colbeck. (Longmans, Green; New York; London; Bombay) 1905.

