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«THRYMSA, A COIN [NOT] IN CIRCULATION IN NORTH-
ERN ENGLAND»: SOURCE CRITICISM OF ARCHBISHOP
WULFSTAN'S NORÐLEODA LAGA AND ITS MON-
ETARY SYSTEMS IN THE WAY OF SOCIAL HISTORY
(ENGLAND, 10–11TH CENTURIES)

Shortly before 1961, when preparing what is currently the fullest Russian translation of the earliest English legislation¹, Sergey Skazkin's team, expectedly, supplied the edition with a historical commentary. Exactly how they executed this task and the nomenclature of scholarly works used in the process is probably irretrievable in the absence of any discussion in the Preface or a comprehensive bibliographical list. A comparison with Felix Liebermann's three-volume edition (1903–1916) indicates that young Aron Gurevich, who likely was responsible for the relevant part², on most occasions concurred with the German translation, printed in the first volume³, yet for some reason never made use

¹ Хрестоматия по истории Средних веков. Т. 1 / Под ред. С. Д. Сказкина. М., 1961.

² Though this is not indicated in the Preface or comments, this fact indirectly follows from certain textual preferences in Cyrillic transliterations shared with Gurevich's earlier articles (ceorl — «кэрл», gafol — «гафоль», geneat — «генит», Ine — «Инэ», þegn — «тэн», of Malmsbury — «Мэлмсберийский») and the fact that of the historians mentioned in the Preface, only Gurevich was a specialist in early English history, a topic of his candidate dissertation in 1950..

³ Compare the concurrence in interpreting the unit of *wæge* (lit. «weight») in III Eg 8:2 and the variance in understanding *gafolyrþ* («land rent») in Rect 4:2 (Хрестоматия. С. 623, 632; Die Gesetze der Angelsachsen, Bd. 1 / Hrsg. F. Liebermann. Halle, 1903. S. 204, 447 (hereafter — Gesetze); all references to original Anglo-Saxon legislation © D. Sukhino-Khomenko, 2021

(or never could make) of the dictionary in the second or Liebermann's comments in the third. Easy and tempting, it is of course by no means my intention to criticize the 1961 edition with the benefit of hindsight: for its time, the book met all requirements of an up-to-date state of the historical art. Nevertheless, a careful reading would suggest that individual opaque vernacular terms posed certain difficulties, for which reason diligent Soviet historians in the pre-digital era of the Iron Curtain had to make *bonā fidē* educated guesses. One such difficulty turned out to be a rather mysterious monetary unit of *thrymsa* mentioned in the so-called *Norðleoda laga* («The Laws of the Northern People», presumably the Northumbrians; hereafter *NL*), more specifically in the schedule of *wergilds* in §§1–6 reported in this currency. Gurevich glossed *thrymsa* as a «coin in circulation in Northern England, equal to $\frac{1}{80}$ of a pound»⁴. Though he did not expound on the source of this interpretation, its roots are easily traceable. Because the *thrymsa* is explained in the text through the Mercian shilling, whose value can be deduced from other sources (see below), Henry Chadwick identified the *thrymsa* in the *NL* as a unit of three pence⁵. Based on a commonly accepted assumption that the pound was normally made up of 240 pence, Gurevich must have reached the 1:80 ratio. As will become evident from an ensuing analysis though, treating the *thrymsa* itself as a coin (*sic*) and specifically of this denomination was one of his own educated guesses mentioned above, likely made only in passing.

Gurevich was by far not the first scholar to get confounded by this Old English monetary term. In this paper, I survey the term's dissonant appearances in the available corpus, construing that *thrymsas* were only briefly in use and that the word was retained mostly to translate foreign and rarer monetary denominations. I then point out how its reappearance in the *NL* served as a key component meant to harmonize what was posed as Northumbrian and Mercian law-codes. I argue from linguistic

in this article follow the abbreviation conventions in Gesetze, Bd. 1. S. xi, and are to this edition throughout).

⁴ Хрестоматия. С. 628.

⁵ Chadwick, H. M. Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions. Cambridge, 1905. P. 20–23 (see also below). In the manner of his time, Chadwick used references to previous works only sparingly, so I cannot rule out that the equation had been established before.

evidence that this was likely a West Saxon effort and I advance new arguments tying this effort to the Archbishop Wulfstan of York (in office 1006–1023). Ultimately, elucidating the *thrymsa* in the *NL* not only contributes to a better understanding of Wulfstan and his likely purposes in composing the *NL*, but it also casts new light on this text's potential source value more generally. Frequent use of the *NL* in studies on early medieval social relationships in Lowland Britain and conclusions drawn from it lends additional justification to such an inquiry.

Thrymsa outside the Norðleoda laga

Before proceeding to the *NL* in its own right, we should consider the *thrymsa*'s other lexico-monetary values in the Old English corpus, as they might hold important evidence to the term's presence in the *NL*.

In the pre-Norman monetary system as a whole, the *thrymsa* stands out as an anomaly. Other monetary terms and units of account and their potential meanings are sufficiently attested in the Old English corpus to establish their plausible, if imperfect, ratios. Yet *thrymsa*, besides the *NL* itself, enjoys only a few contradictory mentions. Certainty pertains only to the word's etymology derived from the Latin name for a late imperial golden coin, *trēmīsis(sis)*⁶, a third of the *solidus* (cf. *sēmīsis(sis)*, half a *solidus*). Limited golden coinage of this type — both struck locally on the Merovingian example and imported — circulated in Britain in c. 575×675 too⁷, though Philip Grierson believes that it went under the name of shillings at the time, at least in Kent⁸. With the pan-European transition to silver money later on, golden *trēmīssēs* disappear from English monetary history. *Thrymsa*'s other features and spelling resist stability.

The early Épinal-Erfurt Glossary⁹ use *thrymsa* in the lemma for *as*. The full phrase, *asses scortear: lidrinae trimsas/asses cortear: lidrinna trynsas*

⁶ This etymology was first put forth in 1586 by William Lambarde (*Naismith R. Medieval European Coinage*. Vol. 8. Cambridge, 2017. P. 366). The only alternative I have come across is Steward Lyon's alleged connection between *þryms(a)* in the *NL* and *þrȳm* (dat. masc. of «three»; Lyon, S. Historical Problems of Anglo-Saxon Coinage, in: *British Numismatic Journal*. 1969. Vol. 38. P. 217). Below I suggest where this link could have originated.

⁷ *Naismith, R. Medieval European Coinage*. Vol. 8. P. 49–57.

⁸ *Hines, J. Units of Account in Gold and Silver in Seventh-Century England*, in: *The Antiquaries Journal*. 2010. Vol. 90. P. 159–161.

⁹ Épinal, Bibliothèque municipale 72 (2). Col. 700, and Erfurt, Wissenschaftliche

(«leather *assēs* (acc. pl., discorded in gender): leather *thrymsas*»), however, makes little grammatical or lexical sense and therefore helps little to elucidate the sought for meaning¹⁰.

The Leiden Glossary¹¹ sheds more light, but even its explanation, *Solidos tres trymisas: sax* («*solidi* (acc. pl.) three *thrymsas*: [in the] Sax[on] language») ¹², leaves room for equations either way. Jan Hessels allowed for both while still leaning to the ratio «three *thrymsas* = one *solidus*», which would also accord with the word's derivation from *trēmī(s)*¹³. On two other occasions, the Leiden Glossary insists on the parity of three *argentei* («silver pieces») to a *solidus*. Assuming textual unity throughout the whole glossary, this would make the *thrymsa* either a unit of nine *argentei* (unlikely) or itself a synonym to the *argenteus*, but etymology suffers either way.

Most of *thrymsa*'s occurrences belong to the Old English translation of the botanic-medical treatise *Herbarium of Pseudo-Apuleius*¹⁴. Modern critics are cautious and not unanimous on the date of this source. Its latest editor, Hubert van de Vriend, hypothesizes that it could have originated in Northumbria during its cultural hegemony in the 8th century, but there remains room for a further elaboration, and all three extant manuscripts are no older than the 11th century¹⁵. In the *Herbarium*, the unknown scholar chose *trymes/tremes* to translate *dragma*, here used as a unit of weight for measuring ingredients in the recipes.

On one occasion *thrymsa* appears in the Old English glosses in the Lindisfarne Gospels¹⁶ written in the late Northumbrian dialect by, according to a colophon at fol. 259r, one Aldred, a provost at Chester-le-Street at some time in *c.* 950×970. In the Miracle of the Stater (Mt 17:24–27),

Bibliothek, Amplonianus 2° 42. Col. 820. Connected to the two are also Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 144 and Cotton Cleopatra A iii.

¹⁰ Glosses in the Épinal-Erfurt Glossary / Ed. J. D. Pfeifer. Oxford, 1974. P. 4.

¹¹ Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek, MS. Voss. Q° Lat. N° 69. Col. 800.

¹² A Late Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary / Ed. J. H. Hessels. Cambridge, 1906. P. 29.

¹³ A Late Eighth-Century Latin-Anglo-Saxon Glossary. P. 30, 32, 186, 195.

¹⁴ The Old English *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus* / Ed. H. van de Vriend. London, 1984.

¹⁵ Cotton Vitellius C. iii, Hatton 76, and 585 (The Old English *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*. P. xi–xliv). Note an early Middle English manuscript (Harley 6258B) too.

¹⁶ London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero D iv. Col. 698–721.

Aldred translated the original Latin *inueniens staterem* («[you will] find a stater») as «four *thrymsas*» (*ðu onfindes t begets ond wæs feor trymes t uni*)¹⁷. The context leaves little doubt that in this single mention throughout all of the New Testament *stater* stands for a *tetradragma* (i.e. four *dragmae*): Peter uses it to pay «the collectors of the two-drachma temple tax»¹⁸ (*qui didrachmam accipiebant*) on his and Jesus's behalf (*da eis pro me et te*). It is thus logical to assume that Aldred shared the *Herbarium*'s translator understanding of some connection between the *thrymsa* and *dragma*. As cunningly noticed by Chadwick, «[t]his usage is not peculiar to English»¹⁹, for indeed *drimise/drimi(s)sa/trimisa/thrimise* is used in two Old High German biblical glossaries, *Abrogans* (archetype after c. 750) and its later reworking *Samanunga uuorto* (archetype c. 790)²⁰, to gloss *dragma/dragme* and *zuiro drimissa/drimise(-a) zua* for *didragma/dragma due*²¹. Both texts concern essentially the same material as Aldred's interlinear glosses, and so it remains an open question whether he could have had any knowledge of them. Conversely, Rory Naismith does not exclude that Aldred preferred *tryms* for *stater* «perhaps as the *stater* was a unit of weight reckoned at three *solidi/aurei*, or half an ounce»²². Both explanations are plausible. It is not entirely clear what a *dragma* — weight, coin, or both — meant for the contemporaries either, and even modern scholarship might occasionally give various estimations, from 3.41g (nominally 1/8 of the Roman ounce) to 4.57g²³.

Sadly, when taken together, these sources do not enable us to pinpoint the *thrymsa*'s exact meaning, for they hardly represent specimens of consonance. In the *Herbarium* alone, fourteen attestations of the formula «one *dragma* = one *thrymsa*» are accompanied by four irregular ones («one *thrymsa* = half/quarter/six *dragmae*/a quarter of an ounce»)

¹⁷ Here and below all references to the OE translations of the Gospels are to: The Holy Gospels in Anglo-Saxon, Northumbrian, and Old Mercian Versions / Ed. W. W. Skeat. Cambridge, 1871–1887.

¹⁸ English translation from the *New International Version*.

¹⁹ Chadwick, H. M. *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*. P. 21, footnote 1.

²⁰ Schaefer, B. *Der Abrogans und die Anfänge der deutschsprachigen Lexikographie*, in: *Germanica Wratislaviensia*. 2010. Bd. 131.

²¹ *Die althochdeutschen Glossen* / Hrsgs. E. Steinmeyer, E. Sievers. Bd. 1. Berlin, 1879. S. 114–115, 253.

²² Naismith, R. *Medieval European Coinage*. Vol. 8. P. 367.

²³ Chadwick, H. M. *Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*. P. 21; Naismith, R. *Medieval European Coinage*. Vol. 8. P. 364; Mlasowsky, A. *Dragme*, in: *Brill's New Pauly*. Vol. 4. Leiden, 2004. P. 704–706; *The Old English Herbarium and Medicina de Quadrupedibus*. P. lxxxiii..

and eight cases of matching the *dragma* to the penny or its fraction and once to the shilling²⁴. The Lindisfarne glossator did not strive for uniformity either. In the Parable of the Lost Coin (Lk 15:8–10) we could expect a *thrymsa*, yet he understands the *dragma* in this episode either as a shilling, or as *ƿif sceattas teasidum* («ten times five *sceattas* [pence?²⁵]»), or as a *cesaring* and also uses the latter word to gloss *didragma* in Mt 17:24. Though some modern biblical scholars see in Judas's thirty silver coins (*triginta argentei*: Mt 26:15; 27:3–6; 27:9) either 8-*dēnārius staterēs*, or Tyrian/Antiochian silver shekels²⁶, Aldred rewards Judas with thirty shillings, which on three out of fourteen occasions can also stand for *dēnārū* (Mt 18:28; Mk 14:5; Jn 12:5) but which he otherwise glosses as «pennies». Other biblical translations complicate the matter even further. Thus, West Saxon translators a generation after Aldred, unlike him, always render the *dēnārius* as the penny, but their penny²⁷ is also the *stater* in Mt 17:27. When glossing the same passage in the *Codex Rushworthianus* (Latin text c. 800) at around the same time, the priest by the name of Farman, who often followed in Aldred's footsteps, begged to differ from his colleagues and thought of the very same *stater* as a shilling. Contrary to the Northumbrian priest, a very early biblical glossary copied into the Milanese manuscript Biblioteca Ambrosiana M. 79 sup. (11th century) pairs the *casering* not with the (*dī*)*dragma* but with the *argenteus* and further treats the penny as, if Michael Lapidge's surmise is correct, a Roman unit of weight, the *siliqua*²⁸.

Modern numismatists normally and justifiably limit themselves to stating this ambiguity surrounding the *thrymsa*²⁹. To all appearances, the very early borrowing of *trēmīssis* (in its original monetary sense, one third of a *solidus*) never took good hold in the English language, possibly due to the quick cease of use of golden coins so called. Even during their

²⁴ The Old English *Herbarium* and *Medicina de Quadrupedibus*. P. lxxxii–lxxxiii.

²⁵ As a numismatic or monetary term, the *sceat(t)* is not without problems and scholarly opinion on the exact monetary value behind this lexeme varies (*Hines, J.* Units of Account in Gold and Silver in Seventh-Century England; *Naismith R.* Medieval European Coinage. Vol. 8. P. 361–363).

²⁶ *DeBloois, N.* Coins in the New Testament, in: *BYU Studies Quarterly*. 1996. Vol. 36. No 3. P. 242–244.

²⁷ Or *wecg* in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 140.

²⁸ *Lapidge, M.* Anglo-Latin Literature. Vol. 1. London, 1996. P. 155–158.

²⁹ E. g.: *Lyon, S.* Historical Problems of Anglo-Saxon Coinage. P. 218; *Naismith, R.* Medieval European Coinage. Vol. 8. P. 366–367.

circulation however, to judge from the polyphony of the extant sources and Grierson's arguments, they passed under a different name. Therefore, it would probably not stretch the evidence to assume that by the late 10th century, *thrymsa* hardly was a living monetary term in everyday parlance and was only sporadically used to convey a somewhat amorphous sense of antiquity and exotica. The assumption of the meaning «three pence» in the *NL* possibly accounts for the switch in spelling, probably owing to the contamination of the Old English *þrī* and the Latin *trēs*³⁰.

All these translatory quirks painfully amass to a single and non-contradictory picture. The inevitable conclusion is that early medieval English-speaking scholars took their liberty when dealing with foreign monetary lexis. Admittedly, in many cases in the literature of the time money and associated vocabulary merited a generalized understanding, not least in biblical examples aimed at the symbolic meaning and whose practical realities likely exceeded the translators' familiarity with them. Attempts at building self-consistent systems on such at times shaky basis by juggling various weight ratios, monetary denominations and terms thus warrants and certain caution.

Thrymsa reanimated: the *Norðleoda laga* and *wergild* arithmetic

But the sheer presence in the *NL*'s list of *wergilds* gave the *thrymsa* its second life and modern 'th-' spelling. It is by far this source alone that *thrymsa* owes most of its appearances in historiography³¹ which all the more calls for a dissecting of the purported «laws of the Northern People».

As has been established by Dorothy Bethurum in 1950, together with *Gepyncðu*, *Að*, *Mircna laga*, and *Hadbot* this short text forms the so-called «Compilation on status» written sometime after *c.*1006 by one of the leading intellectuals, legislators, and statesmen of the period, Wulfstan (d. 1023), bishop of London (996) and then Worcester (1002) and eventually archbishop of York (1006)³² (fig. 1). Only two manuscripts have preserved

³⁰ *Pace* Lyon (see footnote 6). I owe this interpretation to Alexander Mankov.

³¹ Note that this statement concerns only the non-numismatic literature because historians of money have adopted *thrymsa* as a modern term for the early Anglo-Saxon golden coinage (*Blackburn, M., Grierson, Ph. Medieval European Coinage. Vol. 1. Cambridge, 1986. P. 157*).

³² Scholarship on Wulfstan includes dozens of publications. For a synoptic biography, see: *Old English Legal Writings / Ed. A. Rabin. London; Cambridge*

the Old English original³³, later recycled in Anglo-Norman Latin renditions and Laurence Nowell's reverse translation (1568): Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 201 (fol. 102; fig. 2) broadly dated to the 11th century and the *Textus Roffensis* (fol. 93v–94r; figs. 3–4) from 1122×1124. In the former manuscript the *Mircna laga* («Mercian laws», hereafter *ML*) follows immediately after the *NL*, whereas in the *Textus Roffensis* the *ML* appears much earlier (fol. 39v; fig. 5). Stylistically the *NL* falls into two identifiable parts: a supposed Northumbrian «core»³⁴ and unmistakable additions by Wulfstan from at least the seventh paragraph. The brevity, as well as the literary analysis performed below, warrant quoting the oft-postulated non-Wulfstanian «core» in full (tabl. 1).

Two of these figures took a particularly firm root in subsequent historiography: the life values of the commoner (*ceorl*) and *thegn*³⁵. This is not without good reason: both words and their compounds occur on multiple occasions throughout the (predominantly West Saxon) legislation since its earliest manifestations in the 600s³⁶. As persuasively shown by Chadwick, there is little doubt that on the lexical level the West Saxon *ceorl* was synonymous with the legal category of *tweyhunde* (lit. «two-hundreder», *i.e.* a person of the 200-shilling *wergild*)³⁷. Excluding the *NL* and the *ML*, *thegns* are mentioned in twenty-five vernacular and three Latin³⁸ pre-Norman legal or quasi-legal pieces. For the most part descrip-

(Massachusetts), 2020. P. ix–xii. Further references to general reading can be found in: Rabin, A. The Reception of Kentish Law in the Eleventh Century, in: *Languages of the Law in Early Medieval England* / Ed. S. Jurasinski, A. Rabin. Leuven, 2019. P. 226, footnote 4.

³³ *Wormald, P.* The Making of English Law. Vol. 1. Oxford, 1999. P. 206–209, 244–253, 260–262.

³⁴ *Pons-Sanz, S. M.* Norse-Derived Vocabulary in Late Old English Texts. Odense, 2007. P. 188–189; Old English Legal Writings. P. xv. See also the references in footnote 54.

³⁵ Lit. «servant», also spelt «thane» in modern English.

³⁶ Gesetze. Bd. 2. S. 32–33, 218–219 (*s.vv.* «ceorl», «ceorlæs», «ceorlboren», «ceorlisc», «ceorlman», «þegn», «þegnboren», «þegnlagu», «þegnscipes», «þegnweres»).

³⁷ *Chadwick H. M.* Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions. P. 87–99. His method is best showcased by demonstrating the verbal interchangeability of *ceorl* and *tweyhunde* in the hierarchy of penalties for crimes and offences (Af 29–31 *vs.* Af 10, 18:1–3, 39–39:2, 40; In 51 *vs.* In 70).

³⁸ Note that the Latin fragments all have been preserved in the early 12th-century Anglo-Norman translation of the earlier legislation, the so-called *Quadripartitus* (cf. footnote 44).

Table 1. Norðleoda Laga's supposed «core» in the Textus Roffensis and CCCC 201

CCCC 201 (the 1006×1008 redaction)	<i>Textus Roffensis</i> (the 1010×1016 or 1020×1023 redaction)	Translation by Andrew Rabin (after <i>Textus Roffensis</i>) ⁱ
§1. <i>Norðleoda cynges gild is XXX þusend þrymsa: fiftene þusend þrymsa bið þæs wergildes, XV þusend þæs cynedomes; se wær gebirað magum 7 seo cynebot þam leodum.</i>	<i>Cynges wergild is inne mid Englum on folcrist XXX þusend þrymsa: XV þusend ðrymsa byð þæs wæres 7 XV þusend þæs cynedomes; se wær gebýred þam magum 7 seo cynebot þam leodum.</i>	According to the folk-law of the English people, a king's wergild is thirty-thousand thrymsas: fifteen thousand thrymsas are for the man and fifteen thousand thrymsas are for the kingship. The personal wergild belongs to his kinsmen and the royal compensation belongs to the people.
§2. <i>Arc[ebisceopes] 7 æþelinges wergild is XV þusend þrymsa.</i>	<i>Æþelinges wergild is XV þusend þrymsa.</i>	A nobleman's wergild is fifteen thousand <i>thrymsas</i> .
§3. <i>Bisceopes 7 ealdormannes VIII þusend ðrymsa.</i>	<i>Bisceopes 7 ealdormannes VIII þusend þrymsa.</i>	For a bishop and an ealdorman, eight thousand thrymsas.
§4. <i>Holdes 7 cynges heahgerefan III þusend þrymsa.</i>	<i>Holdes 7 hehgerefan III þusend þrymsa.</i>	For a Danish nobleman and a high-reeve, four thousand thrymsas.
§5. <i>Mæsseþegnes 7 woruldþegnes II þusend þrymsa.</i>	<i>Mæsseþegnes 7 woruldþegnes II þusend þrymsa.</i>	For a priest and a secularthane, two thousand thrymsas.
§6. <i>Ceorles wergild is CC 7 LXVI þrymsa, þæt bið II hund scill' be Myrcna lage.</i>	<i>Ceorles wergild is CC 7 LX þrymsa, þæt bið twahund scyllinga be Myrcna lage.</i>	A commoner's wergild is two-hundred and sixty-six thrymsas, that is, two hundred shillings according to the law of the Mercians.

ⁱ Old English Legal Writings. P. 13.

tive rather than prescriptive, they leave the impression³⁹ that *thegns*, first and foremost kings' as the most commonly mentioned, enjoyed a *de facto* social aristocratic status, inasmuch as they might own *bōcland*⁴⁰ and cattle (Rect 1; II Ed 1:1, 2; IV Ed 13; I Cn 11), assist the king in promulgating legislation (IV Ed 1:8) and by acting as his local agents (IV As 6:2, 7), be lords over other people (III Em 7:2; II Ed 3:1, recycled in VIII Atr 8; II Cn 22:2) and carry out judicial functions (AGu 3; III Ed 3; I Atr 1:2, 1:8, 1:12; III Atr 3:1, 4, 13:2–3, reproduced in II Cn 31:1a). Kings' *thegns* further stand in a special relation to regulated penalties or privileges: their fine for idolatry is divided between the king and the Church or substituted by a twelvefold oath (Northu 48, 51), they answer to the monarch for bribery and neglect of governmental duties (IV As 7; V As 1:3), symbolically acknowledge his lordship by paying him *heriots*⁴¹ conditioned by their (ethno-)regional affiliation (II Cn 71), enjoy his exclusive jurisdiction (III Atr 11), easier requirements for swearing certain oaths (Wi 20), a higher fine for forceful entry into residence (Ine 45), and some sort of ill-defined prestige/dignity (*scipe*) that might be subject to forfeit but can also be reobtained (III Ed 3, reproduced in II Cn 15:1 with additions from V As 1:3–4 and III Em 6:2; IV Ed 2a). But without assigning a *wergild*, all these stipulations seem to cover only individual facets of the interaction of the monarchy with some of its closer subjects at different points in time, rather than exhaust all aspects of the supposed status (*scipe*?). At the same time, by the 1000s the Old English lexeme *þegn* had also approached a secondary meaning, «nobleman in general»⁴². Because the top legally defined status group in Wessex are the not infrequently mentioned *twelfhunde* («twelve-hundreders»)⁴³, it is only tempting

³⁹ Born in mind must be discretion and caution in treating such synthetic generalizations made off only superficially similar legal texts written on various occasions across multiple centuries (Hough, C. «An Ald Reht»: Essays on Anglo-Saxon Law. Newcastle upon Tyne, 2014. P. 23; Hudson, J. The Oxford History of the Laws of England. Vol. 2. Croydon, 2012. P. 867).

⁴⁰ Land conveyed with a royal diploma (*bōc*): Hudson, J. The Oxford History of the Laws of England. Croydon, 2012. P. 95–98.

⁴¹ Lit. «war gear»: a fee for the inheritance right (Hudson, J. The Oxford History of the Laws of England. P. 123–124).

⁴² The fact has been observed many times in literature. E.g., see references in: Pons-Sanz, S. M. Norse-Derived Vocabulary in Late Old English Texts. P. 185, footnote 36.

⁴³ Gesetze. Bd. 2. S. 216 (s.vv. «twelfhund», «twelfhynde»).

to postulate the same lexical synonymy between *þegn* and *twelfhunde*⁴⁴ as for *ceorl* and *twyfhunde*.

Logical at first glance and a commonplace in historical works⁴⁵, on closer inspection this attempt falls surprisingly short of finding good support in pre-Norman sources. Apart from the *NL* itself, before 1066 there is only one explicit match. This is found in the *ML*, which is also believed to contain the pre-Wulfstian Mercian «core» based on stylistic grounds (tabl. 2).

Scholarly dominant opinion has the Mercian shilling consisting of four pence (drawn in part from internal evidence in the *ML* itself), as opposed to the late West Saxon worth five pence⁴⁶. When these figures are collated against those in the *NL*, it follows that:

- Mercian shilling = *c.* 4 *sceattas* [pence] (30,000 *sceattas* ÷ 7,200 shillings); hence
- if the 200 [Mercian] shillings of the *ceorl's* *wergild* = 800 pence (200×4); hence
- 1 *thrymsa* = *c.* 3 pence (800÷266); hence
- 2,000 *thrymsa* = 6,000 pence (2,000×3); hence
- the *thegn's* *wergild* = 1,200 [West Saxon] shillings (6,000÷5).

⁴⁴ Indeed, by the 12th century, it must have been a *fait accompli* (Hn 69:2, 70:1, 76:4a; LW 8). Yet following the *post hoc non ergo propter hoc* principle, I would argue against a straightforward projection of the Anglo-Norman interpretations, lexical use, or indeed legal realities onto the pre-1066 state. This is not least because the anonymous author of the first of these treatises (*Leges Henrici Primi*) was familiar with Wulfstan's corpus and hence could have recycled the Archbishop's language (and vision?).

⁴⁵ A full list thereof would exceed the scope of the current article. Of the works mentioned in the current article: *Chadwick, H. M. Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*. P. 28; *Lyon, S. Historical Problems of Anglo-Saxon Coinage*. P. 210–212, 218; *Loyn, H. R. The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500–1087*. London, 1984. P. 49; *Reynolds, A. Later Anglo-Saxon England: Life and Landscape*. Stroud, 2002. P. 58–63; *Wormald, P. The Making of English Law*. P. 409 (reference to LW 8); *Hudson, J. The Oxford History of the Laws of England*. P. 201 (implicitly also on page 208); Russian readers will find similar passages in e.g.: *Савело, К. Ф. Социально-политическое значение сословия английских тенов во второй половине IX в., В кн.: Вестник ЛГУ. 1969. Т. 2. № 8. С. 77; Соколова, М. Н. Поместье в Англии до Нормандского Завоевания, В кн.: Средние века. 1969. Т. 32. С. 102; Глебов, А. Г. Англия в раннее средневековье. СПб., 2007. С. 133. See also references in footnote 79.*

⁴⁶ *Chadwick, H. M. Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*. P. 1–31, 76–114; *Lyon, S. Historical Problems of Anglo-Saxon Coinage*. P. 209–210; *Naismith, R. Medieval European Coinage*. Vol. 8. P. 361–365.

Table 2. Mircna Laga in the Textus Roffensis (differences with CCCC 201 are negligible)

<i>Textus Roffensis</i> (the 1010×1016 or 1020×1023 redaction) ⁱⁱ	Translation by Andrew Rabin (after <i>Textus Roffensis</i>) ⁱⁱⁱ
§1. <i>Georles wergylð is on Myrcna lage CC scill</i> .	According to the law of the Mercians, a commoner's wergild is two hundred shillings.
§1.1. <i>Ʒegnes wergylð is syx swa micel, þæt byð XII hundred scil</i> .	The wergild of a thane is six times as much, that is, twelve hundred shillings.
§2. <i>Ʒonne byð cynges anyfeald wergylð six þegena wær be Myrcna lage, þæt is XXX þusend sceatta, 7 þæt bið ealles CXX punda</i> .	According to the law of the Mercians, then, the king's individual wergild is the wergild of six thanes, that is, thirty thousand sceattas, which is one hundred and twenty pounds in all.
§3. <i>Swæ micel is þæs wergildes on [folces folcricht be Mercna lage]</i> ^{iv} .	So much is wergild in the folk law of the people, according to the law of the Mercians.
§3.1. <i>And for ðam cymedome gebyrað oþer swælc to bote on cynegylde</i> .	And for the kingship there is a second compensation owed equal to that for the king.
§4. <i>Se wær gebyreð maþum 7 seo cynebot þam leodum</i> .	The wergild belongs to his kinsmen and the royal compensation to the people.

ⁱⁱ For the sake of reader-friendliness, I omit the readings of Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MSS 201 and 190 (except §3) as perfectly identical in contents and showing only minor and common scribal variance hardly reflecting anything beyond the scribes' training/preference (such as 'i' for 'y', '7' for 'and', etc.).

ⁱⁱⁱ Old English Legal Writings. P. 15.

^{iv} Omitted in the *Textus Roffensis* and supplied from Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 190.

In other words, the arithmetic in the *NL* seems to neatly confirm the *ML*'s verbal testimony of the *thegnly* 1,200-shilling *wergild*. This in turn transforms *thegns* from a privileged club of primarily kings' few vassals, their high «servants» in the word *þegn*'s original meaning and semantics, into a broad and legally defined class, «[m]any of [whom] can only have been distinguished by their wergild of twelve hundred shillings from the higher ranks of the peasantry around them»⁴⁷.

The *primā faciē* congruence between the units in the equation above might be upset by a chain of mutually dependent concessions required to harmonize the evidence. Firstly, the inconsistency of the *thegn*'s and *ceorl*'s *wergild* tariffs must be acknowledged: the *ML*'s proportion is 6:1 but it is 7.5:1 in the *NL*. Secondly, even then a sudden switch of currency within adjacent lines must be conceded, from West Saxon shilling in §5 to Mercian in §6. Finally, the evidence for a 1,200-shilling *wergild* as such stems exclusively from Wessex, whereas both the *ML* and the *NL* supposedly report non-West Saxon norms.

In all likelihood, the author thought of amounts of *wergild* as values attached to the number of shillings in them. The West Saxon system appears as the reference point in his calculations. To somehow equate the two systems of counting shillings he was familiar with, the otherwise bizarre figure of 266 *thrymsas* must have been added in Norðleod 6. Figure 6 visualizes this possible thinking of the author. But, as they are, the texts leave us in the dark as to why the Northumbrian values got expressed in *thrymsas* and not shillings (Mercian or West Saxon) or Scandinavian monetary units (OE *marc* < ON *mǫrk*, OE *ōra* < ON *eyrir*, both well attested in the Danelaw), and why the *thrymsa* was eventually explained through the Mercian and not West Saxon shilling in Norðleod 6, if above the author observed the latter reckoning.

Deconstructing the Norðleoda Laga and the Mircna Laga: Textual criticism

To somehow crack this conundrum and do justice to the article's title, one shall probably require subjecting the two sources in question to additional textual criticism. Perhaps a tentative solution can be arrived

⁴⁷ Stenton, F. M. *The First Century of English Feudalism, 1066–1166*. Oxford, 1932. P. 115.

at on two theoretical premises, established by Andrew Rabin's example of abandoning treating the *ML* and the *NL* at face value. The first entails regarding these texts as integral parts of a bigger one, the «Compilation on status»⁴⁸. The second would have us reading them not as mere records of some hitherto established praxes, but as a deliberate attempt to create «new law» in accordance with Wulfstan's vision of a «holy society» capable to «face with confidence the unspeakable terrors of the Final Days»⁴⁹.

Dating and localization

In their extant forms, neither the *NL* nor the *ML* reveals unambiguous orthographic traces of the specifically Northumbrian or Mercian dialects (with the caveat in mind that our evidence for them is limited). On the contrary, their language demonstrates little variance between the two and, importantly, is within the scope of late West Saxon. Thus, we could expect Anglian forms **aldor-* and **alles* in *Norðleod* 3 and *Mirc* 2. Similarly, Mercian glosses in the *Codex Rushworthianus* reflect the Anglian phonological change of *wer* to *wær* («man») and *þegn* to *þægn*, and the Northumbrian rounding of *e* after the back approximant *w* in *woer* is also well attested. No such orthograms (**wærgild/woergild* or **þægn*) are present. The spelling *wor(u)ld* and *heh-* in *Norðleod* 3 and 4 could have been such Anglian traces, but phonological developments leading to them are also present in late West Saxon and find attestations⁵⁰.

One could still postulate the previous existence of some lost dialectal archetypes for both texts whose orthographies were consistently mended by West-Saxon-trained scribes at a later stage. This approach has been implicitly preferred by linguist Robert Fulk who relied on Wormald's attributions of the *NL* and the *ML*. Doing so, however, necessitates an exception to his own thesis that «most texts displaying a considerable admixture of Anglian features are of Anglian origin» by explaining their absence as such a thorough Saxonization «as to eliminate all linguistic traces of their dialect origins»⁵¹. Nevertheless, the *Textus Roffensis*, despite its very

⁴⁸ Rabin, A. Archbishop Wulfstan's 'Compilation on Status' in the *Textus Roffensis*. P. 182–183.

⁴⁹ Lionarons, J. T. The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan. Woodbridge, 2010. P. 7.

⁵⁰ Campbell, A. Old English Grammar. Oxford, 1959. P. 55–56, 131, 133, 135, 160. I am indebted to Alexander Mankov for advising me on OE dialects.

⁵¹ Fulk, R. D. Localizing and Dating Old English Anonymous Prose, and How

late date, is the sole surviving copy of the 7th-century Kentish legal material, and, despite the language's complexity, still reflected Kentish phonology of the supposed date of these law-codes⁵². Allowing for an Anglian archetype thus fails to explain the *NL* and *ML*'s West Saxon features in the dialect-sensitive *Textus Roffensis*, the spellings in which are also consonant with the versions in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MSS 201 and 190.

The 860s or somewhat later are commonly set as the *terminus post quem* for the *NL* and *ML*'s tentative «core» on the strength of the presence of *hold* (< ON *hauldr/holldr*) in §4⁵³. The inclusion of the king's *wergild* is usually taken as the *terminus ante quem*, since the Viking kingdom of York lost its formal sovereignty in 952×954⁵⁴ and the indigenous Mercian monarchy was abolished in the 880s⁵⁵. Lexicographical peculiarities, however, show a more complex picture. Overall, as a social term of Scandinavian origin, *hold* is only patchily attested in Old English between the early 10th and late 11th centuries⁵⁶. As regards high reeve, this is a specifically West Saxon way of calling Northumbrian non-sovereign rulers: the title is first mentioned already in 778, but only recorded in the common stock of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* during King Alfred's reign (r. 871–899)⁵⁷. It next appears in two royal diplomas in 946 for the Northumbrian ealdorman Oswulf, who submitted to King Eadred (r. 946–955)⁵⁸, and then again half a century later in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*⁵⁹. As a technical term with the sense «mem-

the Inherent Problems Relate to Anglo-Saxon Legislation, in: *English Law Before Magna Carta* / Ed. S. Jurasinski *et al.* Leiden; Boston, 2010. P. 67, 77.

⁵² Hough, C. The Earliest English Texts? The Language of the Kentish Laws Reconsidered, in: *Textus Roffensis* / Ed. by B. O'Brien, B. Bombi. Turnhout, 2015.

⁵³ Pons-Sanz, S. M. Norse-Derived Vocabulary in Late Old English Texts. P. 48–50.

⁵⁴ Sawyer, P. H. The Last Scandinavian Kings of York, in: *Northern History*. 1995. Vol. 31. P. 39–44.

⁵⁵ Wormald, P. The Making of English Law. P. 393; Hudson, J. The Oxford History of the Laws of England. P. 201.

⁵⁶ Besides the text under discussion, *hold* is recorded in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* (*ASC*) on four occasions: s.a. 904 (MS A) or 905 (MSS BCD); 911 (MSS BCD); 914 (MS A) or 915 (MSS BCD); and 917 (MS A) (*English Historical Documents*, c. 500–1042. Vol. 1 / Ed. D. Whitelock. London; New York, 1979. P. 209, 211, 213, 215; hereafter — EHD; all references to the *ASC* are to this edition). Two further mentions are in the Lindisfarne glosses in Mk 6:21 and as a nickname in the late 11th-century *De obsessione Dunelmi*.

⁵⁷ *ASC* (MSS D and E). S.a. 778.

⁵⁸ S 520 and 544 (Sawyer, P. H. *Anglo-Saxon Charters*. London, 1968).

⁵⁹ *ASC* (MSS ACDE). S.a. 1001/1002.

ber of a royal dynasty», the word *ætheling* probably took shape during the West Saxon 10th-century hegemony, when the ruling house had many male offspring eligible for the throne in each generation⁶⁰. Unless we grant that the Scandinavian borrowing *lagu* (< ON *log*) «must have been added in the eleventh century, perhaps by Wulfstan»⁶¹ to some sort of indigenous remains, its presence points at the 930s (I As 2) as the earliest attested linguistic *terminus post quem*⁶². Since the word *þegn* began to be opposed to *ceorl* only towards the close of the 10th century, it is unlikely that the wording in Mirc 1 could be much earlier. Instructive is the phrasing of Wer 7 dated by Wormald to the reign of King Edmund (r. 939–946) and plausibly connected to II Em. The paragraph outlines the protocol for *wergild* payment and concludes that, «[w]ith a ceorl's wergild, everyone shall proceed along the lines proper for him, as we reckoned for twelve-hundredmen»⁶³. The unknown author pairs *ceorls* with the *twelfhunde*, not with *thegns*.

To summarize, without assuming that the two texts were at some point re-written in their entirety, their linguistic characteristics rather indicate a late West Saxon origin.

Authorship

Regarding the demarcation between the «core» and Wulfstan's additions in the *NL*, Bethurum suggested drawing the dividing line between §§6 and 7. Rabin argues that it is possible to see Wulfstan's hand already in the second sentence of §6, not least because this would make more sense when viewing the «Compilation on status» as a unified text. Picking up the baton from Rabin, I cannot rule out that the supposed «cores» are a phantom.

Despite the low-key style, which is not characteristic of Wulfstan, there is potential evidence of his touch already in *Norðleod* 1–5. The lexeme *mæsseþegn*, «mass-*thegn*», for «priest» does not occur anywhere else in the corpus but is echoed in a specific Wulfstanianism *weofodþegn*, «altar-*thegn*». Similarly, *worldþegn* is also unique to the Archbishop's idiolect, as

⁶⁰ See Hudson, J. *The Oxford History of the Laws of England*. P. 202–203 and the reference therein to David Dumville's work in footnote 19.

⁶¹ Fulk, R. D. *Localizing and Dating Old English Anonymous Prose*. P. 67.

⁶² Note that *lagu* was also one of Wulfstan's preferred legal terms (*Pons-Sanz, S. M. Norse-Derived Vocabulary in Late Old English Texts*. P. 68–124).

⁶³ Wormald, P. *The Making of English Law*. P. 377.

is the insistence on legal parity in privileges with a priest (Gepyncðu 6; Að 2; V Atr 9:1; VI Atr 5:3; VIII Atr 28; I Cn 6:2a)⁶⁴. The apposition of archbishop/*ætheling* and bishop/ealdorman in §§3–4 resembles similar pairings in Wulfstan’s Grið 4, 5, 11, 12. The hierarchy from *Norðleod* 1–4 (king—archbishop/*ætheling*—bishop/ealdorman) is further fully present in II Cn 58. And the very compound *Norðleod* could in theory mirror a similar construction in Grið 13, *Norðengle* («northern English»). As for the *ML*, Rabin rightly observes the absence of pronounced «verbal cues often taken as a sign of Wulfstan’s editorial hand»⁶⁵. However, what makes the *ML* inseparable from the *NL* is the almost verbatim repetition of the king’s double *wergild* and its identical numerical value of 30,000 (though the currency differs). Going one step further, we might even identify the potential source of inspiration for this figure. In 694, the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* reports a monetary compensation of 30,000 in unspecified currency to King Ine of Wessex (r. 689–726) from the people of Kent for their previous murder of a West Saxon royal, Mul⁶⁶.

If this reasoning is correct, there remains little doubt that both texts came from Wulfstan’s pen from the start, as meaningfully interdependent pieces. This interpretation also helps to explain the insertion of the clumsy 266 *thrymsas*, alien to the rest of the neat schedule of *wergilds*. Simply on the strength of its oddity this figure was likely a deliberate addition. Perhaps the seemingly out-of-place passage served the function of a common denominator or conversion coefficient intended to connect the two halves. Viewed thus, this insertion starts making even more sense based on Rabin’s assertion, that «the parallel references to a *ceorl*’s *wergild* in *Norðleod* 6 and 12 strengthen the connective tissue between *Norðleoda laga* and the subsequent text in the Compilation, *Mircna laga*, which echoes *Norðleod* 6 in its opening clause»⁶⁷.

⁶⁴ All are Wulfstan’s (Old English Legal Writings. P. xiii–xxxii).

⁶⁵ Rabin, A. Archbishop Wulfstan’s ‘Compilation on Status’ in the *Textus Roffensis*. P. 180.

⁶⁶ EHD. P. 169. Whitelock interprets the currency as pence and points out textual discrepancies.

⁶⁷ Rabin, A. Archbishop Wulfstan’s ‘Compilation on Status’ in the *Textus Roffensis*. P. 180.

Norðleoda Laga, Mircna Laga, and thrymsa reconsidered

If the *ML* and the *NL* are original Wulfstanian pieces after all, we might ask what the prelate's intentions were in composing them. Knowing this may enable us to loop back to the monetary beginning of this article and offer a new interpretation of the *thrymsa* and its significance.

As has been briefly alluded to above, one of the Archbishop's favourite brainchildren was the ideal of what Wormald aptly called an «orderly» or «holy society», or «the sort of society [Wulfstan] was sure that the kingdom of the English had to be, if they were to keep the terms of the Covenant whereby (as Bede had shown) God allowed them to occupy their beautiful island, and if they were after all to avoid the fate of their backsliding British predecessors»⁶⁸. This later fear was all the more apparent as the kingdom became target of the renewed Viking attacks conceptualized by Wulfstan as divine punishment in his famous *Sermo Lupi ad Anglos* («The sermon of the Wolf to the English») ⁶⁹. In a recent study of Wulfstan's recycling of the 7th-century Kentish legal corpus, Rabin concluded that it could have «initially functioned for Wulfstan as a source of moral and legal precedent upon which he could draw in the course of his emerging project of social regeneration», and it furthermore «enable[d] Wulfstan to ground what may have appeared as legislative innovation in the legal traditions of the conversion era»⁷⁰. A similar repetition of other 7th-century material visibly stands out in the second half of the *NL* as well. Granting 120 shillings of *wergild* to a Welsh possessor of a *hide* (OE *hīd*, *hīwisc*)⁷¹ and 80

⁶⁸ Quote after: *Lionarons, J. T.* The Homiletic Writings of Archbishop Wulfstan. Woodbridge, 2010. P. 3.

⁶⁹ EHD. P. 928–934.

⁷⁰ *Rabin, A.* The Reception of Kentish Law in the Eleventh Century. P. 236, 239. To Rabin's list may be added Carole Hough's observation of the parallelism between King Æthelbert's law-code and the 11th-century *Be wifmannes bewedding* («On the betrothal of a woman»), though the latter was likely penned not by Wulfstan himself but rather someone from his circle (*Hough, C.* «An Ald Reht». P. 13; *Wormald, P.* The Making of English Law. P. 385–387).

⁷¹ Though commonly considered to have originated as plot of land capable to provide for one family, «[i]n the historical period the hide appears as a territorial unit for the assessment of taxes, rents, renders and services for kingdom and lordship» (*Charles-Edwards, T. M.* Kinship, Status and the Origins of the Hide, in: *Past and Present*. 1972. Vol. 56. P. 4).

to his compatriot with only half a *hide* in *Norðleod* 7–7:1 closely builds on *Ine* 32. Awarding a *ceorlisc* owner of five *hides* a 2,000-*thrymsa* (*thegn*'s) *wergild* in *Norðleod* 9⁷² seems to be taken from a similar promotion of a Welshman with five *hides* to a *siexhunde* in *Ine* 24:2. Calling such a *ceorl*'s grandson (on condition the land is still in the family) an archaic *gesiðcund* («*gesið*-kin»)⁷³ seems to be another look-back at *Ine*'s lexical use. Conversely, emphasise on the insufficiency of mere ownership of expensive military equipment by landless «churlish parvenues» to be qualified for an extended *wergild* seems pristinely *Wulfstan*'s⁷⁴. In the age of widescale political and social turmoil, including decimation of the lay elite⁷⁵, caused by the late Viking expansion in the British Isles, such insistence on social compartmentalization appears fully in line with his «concern with social status [...and] disgust for the disregard of proper social order», to quote *Sara Pons-Sanz*⁷⁶.

On the strength of the employment of archaic vocabulary, reference to previously recorded praxis, and copying and adapting from previous (West Saxon) legislation, the supposed Mercian and Northumbrian laws could be seen as part of the same programme. Indeed, this would not be the first time *Wulfstan* resorted to a historical-legal fiction to present his vision as rooted in an old tradition, as is evidenced by his *Laws of Edward the Elder and Guthrum*, one of his earliest (1002×1004) specimens of the genre⁷⁷.

The textual analysis above seemingly makes the *thrymsa* in the *NL* finally fall into its rightful place. Choosing this archaism instead of the more familiar shilling hardly reflected any monetary praxis in the region. More likely it was preferred for its antique appeal (possibly a northern too: see above), not unlike that of *sceat(t)* or *gesiðcund*, and thereby is another example of *Wulfstan* anchoring his vision in a fictitious tradition.

⁷² Also rephrased and expanded in *Geþyncðu* 3.

⁷³ *Loyn, H. R.* *The Governance of Anglo-Saxon England 500–1087*. P. 47–50, with a special reference to his 1955 lexicographical article at page 49, footnote 34.

⁷⁴ Cf. references to *thegnly* landownership in royal law-codes, above.

⁷⁵ *Stenton, F. M.* *Anglo-Saxon England*. Oxford, 1971. P. 375–393; *Mack, K.* *Changing Thegns: Cnut's Conquest and the English Aristocracy*, in: *Albion*. 1984. Vol. 16. No. 4. P. 375–387.

⁷⁶ *Pons-Sanz, S. M.* *Norse-Derived Vocabulary in Late Old English Texts*. P. 173.

⁷⁷ *Old English Legal Writings*. P. xiv.

Viewing the *NL* and the *ML* «as series of interdependent texts organized and framed in a fashion that gestures towards a comprehensive model of an ordered English society»⁷⁸ further answers one of the questions posed above: Wulfstan chose to explain the *thrymsa* through the Mercian shilling simply because the following section of the «Compilation on status» was *Mircna laga* and not **Westseaxna laga*. That this arithmetic could lead to a potential monetary disparity must have paled in comparison to the symbolic importance of the 200-shilling *wergild* of the *ceorl* as a *twyhunde* person (cf. the symbolism of 30,000 which likely took precedence of the arithmetically correct 28,800 *sceattas* (7,200 shillings × 4) in the king's *wergild*).

In the absence, so far, of further textual evidence, it is thus safest to view the *NL* and the *ML* and the whole «Compilation on status» as a purely didactic enterprise⁷⁹ expressed in legalistic language that, among his other works, paved the way to Wulfstan's *opus magnum*, King Cnut's law-codes (after 1020). At the end of the day, that among the «Northern people» the *thegn*'s and *ceorl*'s *wergilds* related as 7.5:1⁸⁰, that a «Scandinavian title [*hold*] applied to a class of noblemen in the Danelaw with a *wergild* double that of a *thegn*»⁸¹, that «in Northumbria [...] the earl's *wergild* was valued at four times that of the *thegn*»⁸², that the local currency was the *thrymsa*, or that the *NL* and the *ML* are «the only records of either Mercian or Northumbrian legislation»⁸³ and stand independent testimony for a *thegnly* privileged 1,200-shilling *wergild* (whether owing to royal service or otherwise) thus seems questionable. It is maybe best to presently retire using the two texts as accurate depictions of actual social reality.

⁷⁸ *Rabin, A.* Archbishop Wulfstan's 'Compilation on Status' in the *Textus Roffensis*. P. 183.

⁷⁹ This is indirectly suggested by, among other evidence, the inclusion of King Ine's *wēālas* (early subjugated Romano-Celtic population in Southern Britain: *Reynolds, A.* Later Anglo-Saxon England. P. 37), for whom there hardly was a place in a supposedly (late) Northumbrian legal landscape.

⁸⁰ *Stenton, F. M.* Anglo-Saxon England. P. 488; EHD, P. 469; *Williams, A.* The World before Domesday. London, 2008. P. 2.

⁸¹ EHD, P. 209.

⁸² *Woolf, A.* From Pictland to Alba 789–1070. Edinburgh, 2007. P. 348.

⁸³ *Hough, C.* «An Ald Reht». P. 12.

Conclusion: caveats of using rare names for money in wider historical reconstructions

This article began with a lexical inquiry into the background of one individual gloss in the Russian translation of select pre-Norman English laws whose author had to provide his readers with an explanatory note on an odd monetary denomination, the *thrymsa*. This undertaking appeared particularly justified in the light of the widespread use of that single legal fragment, the *Norðleoda laga*, together with its follow-up, the *Mircna laga*, both parts of the «Compilation on status», in exposing the early medieval social conditions in Lowland Britain. After an untangling of a mass of overlapping testimonies, this elusive money emerged only a tip of an iceberg made of somewhat deficient understandings of *thrymsa*'s role in the studied texts. All evidence combined, their author *ab inceptō* was almost certainly archbishop and ideologist Wulfstan, and he resorted to this quirky word for money as merely another literary element in promoting his vision of a properly and duly organized society destined to Christian salvation. This order was professed as ostensibly rooted in time-honoured tradition, and Wulfstan's reinterpretation and subsequent use of *thrymsa* emphasized his message.

In broader historiographical terms, I have also hopefully outlined some of the caveats in exploitation of some vaguely and scarcely attested monetary terms in drawing far-reaching historical conclusions, especially if an intellectual agenda might lurk behind and feasibly explain such terms' presence⁸⁴. That beyond modern numismatic nomenclature *thrymsa* hardly

⁸⁴ Russian readers may find a parallel in the recent exchange of arguments about the presence of shillings (*цѣлазѣ*) in the Russian Primary Chronicle between Constantin Zuckerman and Petr Stefanovich (Цукерман К. Английский след в ранней летописи, или летописец шутит, В кн.: *У истоков и источников* / Отв. ред. Ю. А. Петров. М., 2019; Стефанович, П. С. Шиллинги на Руси, или «шутки» летописцев, В кн.: *Восточная Европа в Древности и Средневековье*. Т. 32 / Под ред. Е. А. Мельниковой. М., 2020). Both conclusions drawn from a single are drawn from a single (factually double but obviously a duplication, s.a. 885/964) obscure mention in the Chronicle entail most serious implications. The chronicler is either said to have referred to the English *danegeld* tax allegedly known through Scandinavian mitigation, or to have used his monetary lexis fully terminologically and recorded an actual tax rate imposed by the Khazars on the Vyatichi tribe. Both theories, cunning as they are, invite further substantiation. The first conclusion is reached through uxtaposing the ORus *пало* («plough») in the Chronicle's text as a translation to the OE *hide* (not implausible in itself, even if requiring a lot of intermediary steps, but not unproblematic either (see footnote 70), and rely-

was a coin, as Gurevich *bonā fidē* guessed in passing, seems to raise no objections among specialists in English monetary history. But in the light of the presented evidence, when construing socio-historical narratives medievalists should probably consider discontinuing treating the *thrymsa* as an otherwise unattested unit of accounting *wergilds* in particular and the «Compilation on status» at face value in general. If anything, neither seems to relate to the famous Rankean dictum *wie es eigentlich gewesen* [war].

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This article spotlights the *thrymsa* (OE *þryms/trimsa/tryms*) as a supposed monetary unit in pre-Norman England and the importance this individual case study may hold for research in early medieval English social history. In the main, Anglo-Saxon

ing on exclusively post-Conquest sources in their assertion of one shilling (at the time already counted at 12 pence) per *hide* as a «normal» tax rate). The second conclusions follows from a collation of translations for different Biblical money terms (as this paper illustrated, such straightforward methodology might not always fully account for the early medieval intellectuals' agendas and purviews).

monetary system was meticulously reconstructed by Henry Chadwick (1905), but in it the *thrymsa* appears an anomaly, as it gets only a few mentions in independent sources over the whole documented Old English period. Due to various correspondences in the texts (*as*, *dragma*, $\frac{1}{4}$ *stater*, ($\frac{1}{8}$?) *solidus*, three pence) establishing the *thrymsa*'s exact value stops at the etymological stage (< Lat. *trēmīsis*). On the face of its marginality, numismatists are for most part little interested in the *thrymsa*. Nevertheless, its presence in the so-called *Norðleoda laga* («The Laws of the Northern People», element in York archbishop Wulfstan's (d. 1023) «Compilation on status» believed to contain older material) as the expression of the sums of *wergilds* has given rise to interpretations of these *wergilds* with far reaching implications. The article offers an original explanation of the reasons for the *thrymsa*'s presence and function in the *Norðleoda laga*. Departing from modern textual analysis of Wulfstan's works, the author arrives at two consecutive conclusions: first, as an early loan from Latin *thrymsa* never assumed a stable value in the English monetary system likely due to the quick disappearance of coins of this name from circulation; second, Wulfstan deliberately used this term for stylistic reasons and archaization of the text as part of his ideology of an «orderly society». Some immediate consequences of this interpretation can be, first, a reappraisal of the *Norðleoda laga*'s source potential, and, second, retiring this text as a primary source at face value for studies in social history. This particular case study may further illustrate the ever-present necessity for a textual and source criticism in monetary history when the latter is taken as a steppingstone for broader historical conclusions and interpretations.

Key words: numismatics, monetary history, Anglo-Saxon history, source studies, wergild, Wulfstan, Northumbria, Mercia, Wessex

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В статье поднимается вопрос, что такое «тримса» (*bryms/trimsa/tryms*) в англо-саксонской денежной системе, и какое значение этот частный вопрос может иметь для исследований в области английской раннесредне-

вековой социальной истории. Современные представления об этой системе в целом унаследованы от фундаментального труда «*Studies on Anglo-Saxon Institutions*» (1905) Г. Чэдвика, в которой автор скрупулезно обобщил и суммировал доступные сведения. «Тримса» в ней стоит особняком, будучи упомянутой на протяжении всего древнеанглийского письменного периода лишь в нескольких независимых источниках. По причине несовпадающих соответствий в каждом из этих случаев (*as*, *dragma*, $\frac{1}{4}$ *stater*, ($\frac{1}{3}$?) *solidus*, три пенса), точное определение денежно-монетной сущности «тримсы» за исключением этимологизации (< лат. *trēmis(sis)*) затруднено. Ввиду подобной маргинальности «тримса» не представляет серьезного интереса для нумизматов. Однако её присутствие в т.н. «Законах северных людей» (элемент юридической компиляции йоркского архиепископа Вульфстана (ум. 1023), предположительно содержащий более ранний материал) для выражения сумм вергельдов обеспечило регулярное появление в историографии интерпретации этих вергельдов с далеко идущими выводами в сфере социальной истории. В статье предлагается оригинальная трактовка появления и употребления слова «тримса» в «Законах северных людей». Отталкиваясь от имеющегося источниковедческого анализа текстов Вульфстана, автор выдвигает два взаимосвязанных тезиса: во-первых, как раннее заимствование из латыни «тримса» не получила реального денежного воплощения в английской системе в связи с быстрым выходом из обращения исконной монеты с таким названием; во-вторых, Вульфстан намеренно использовал этот термин в стилистических целях архаизации текста в рамках его идеологии «правильного общества». Непосредственным следствием данной трактовки могут быть, во-первых, переосмысление источниковой ценности и атрибуции «Законов северных людей»; во-вторых, отказ от разнообразных построений в сфере социальной истории на основании буквальной трактовки данного текста. Представляется, что данный частный случай может стать иллюстрацией актуальности источниковедческо-текстологической критики в сфере денежной истории.

Ключевые слова: нумизматика, денежная история, англо-саксонская история, источниковедение, вергельд, Вульфстан, Нортумбрия, Мерсия, Уэссекс

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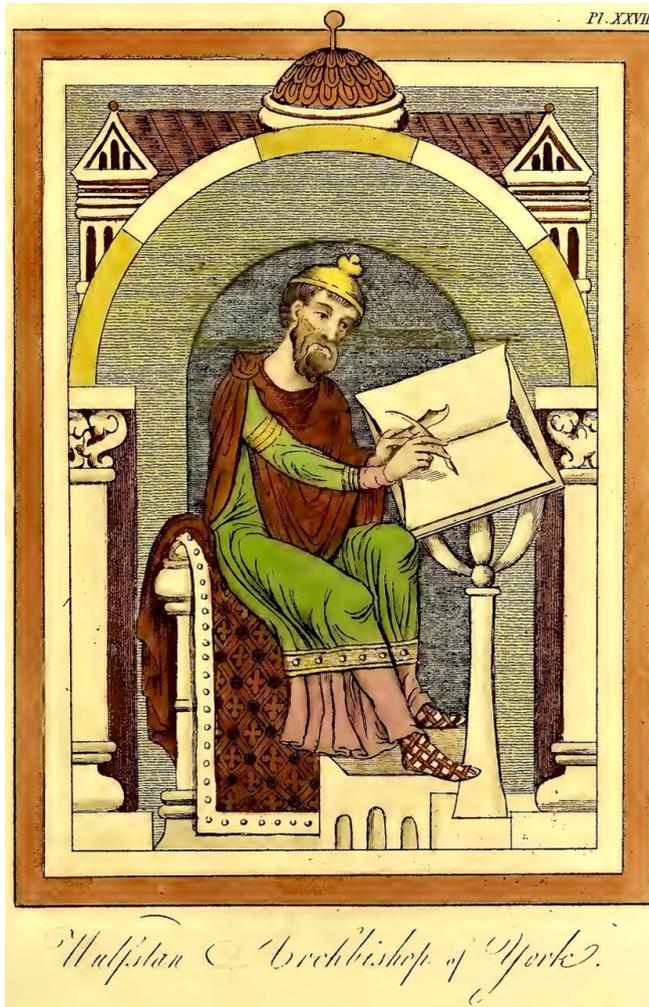


Figure 1. Possible portrait of Archbishop Wulfstan of York.

Reproduction from: *Strutt, J. A Complete View of the Dress and Habits of the People of England. Vol. 1. London, 1796* (public domain). Strutt's inspiration was Cotton MS Claudius A III, fol. 30r which goes unnamed. Some modern scholars believe this miniature might in fact depict Burchard of Worms (d. 1025). But until further substantiation one is excused for entertaining the possibility that a medieval illuminator might have left us a stylized portrait of Wulfstan.

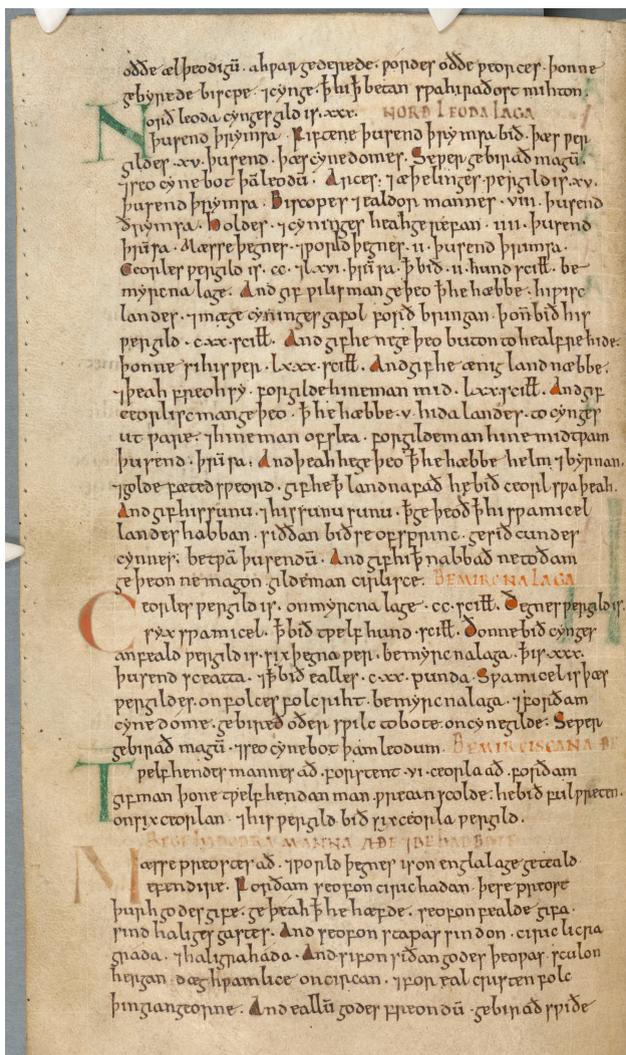
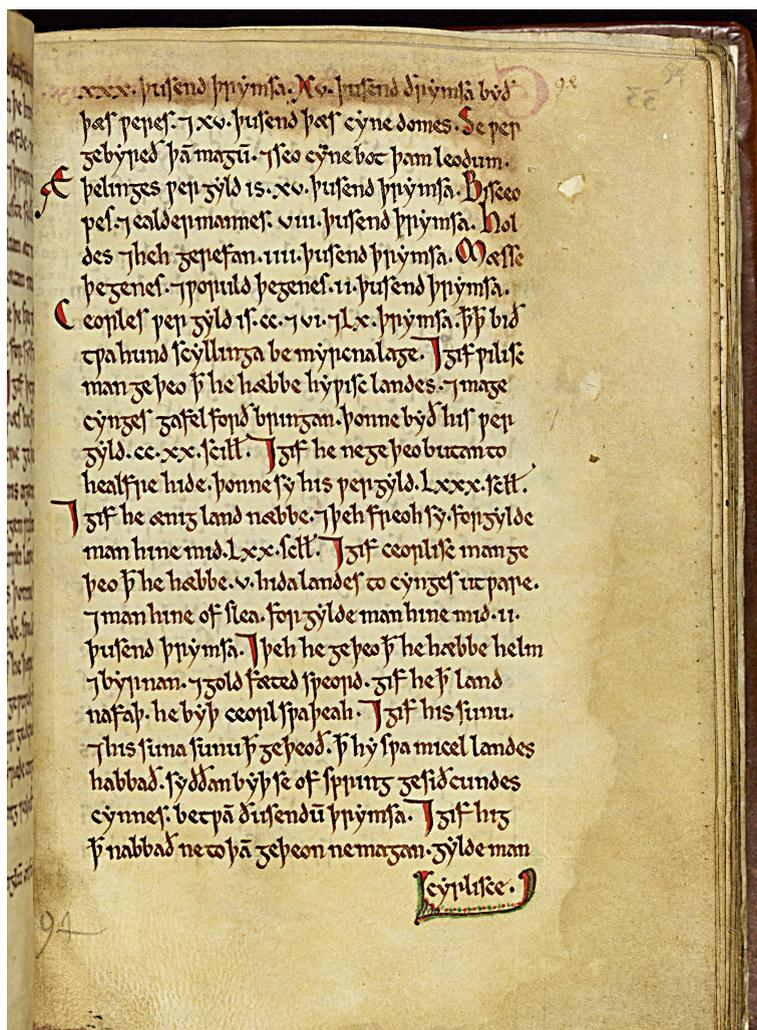


Figure 2. Norðleoda laga and Mircna laga in Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 201, fol. 102.

Image reproduced with the kind permission of the Parker Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge.



Figs. 4. Norðleoda laga in the Textus Roffensis, fols. 94v.
 Reproduced with the kind permission of Rochester Cathedral.

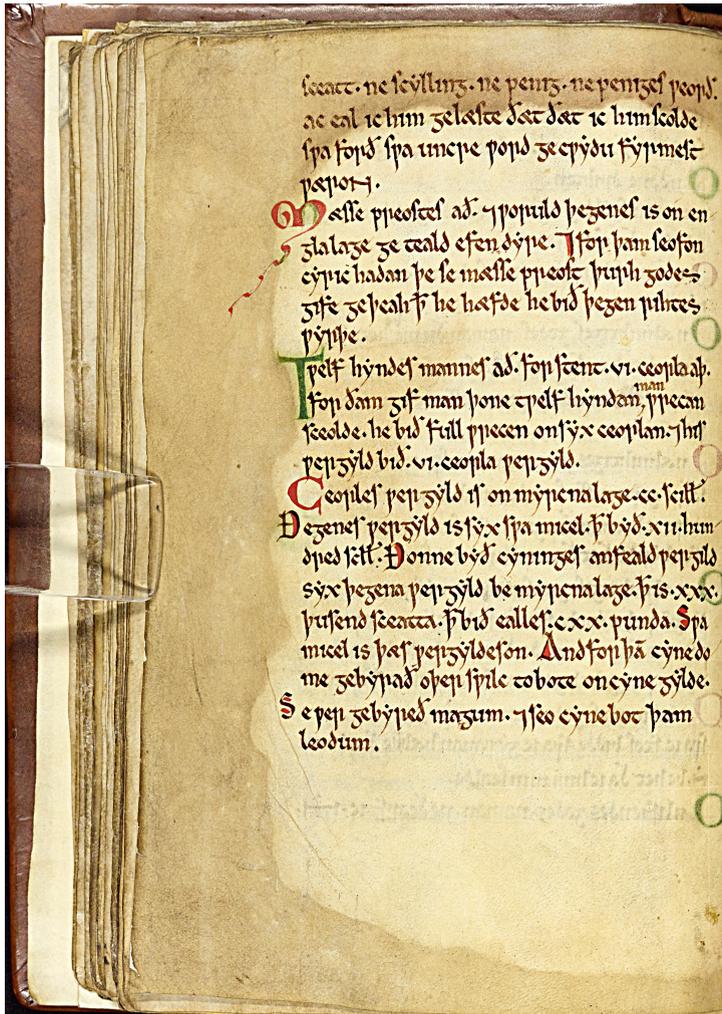


Fig. 5. Mircna laga in the Textus Roffensis, fol. 39r.
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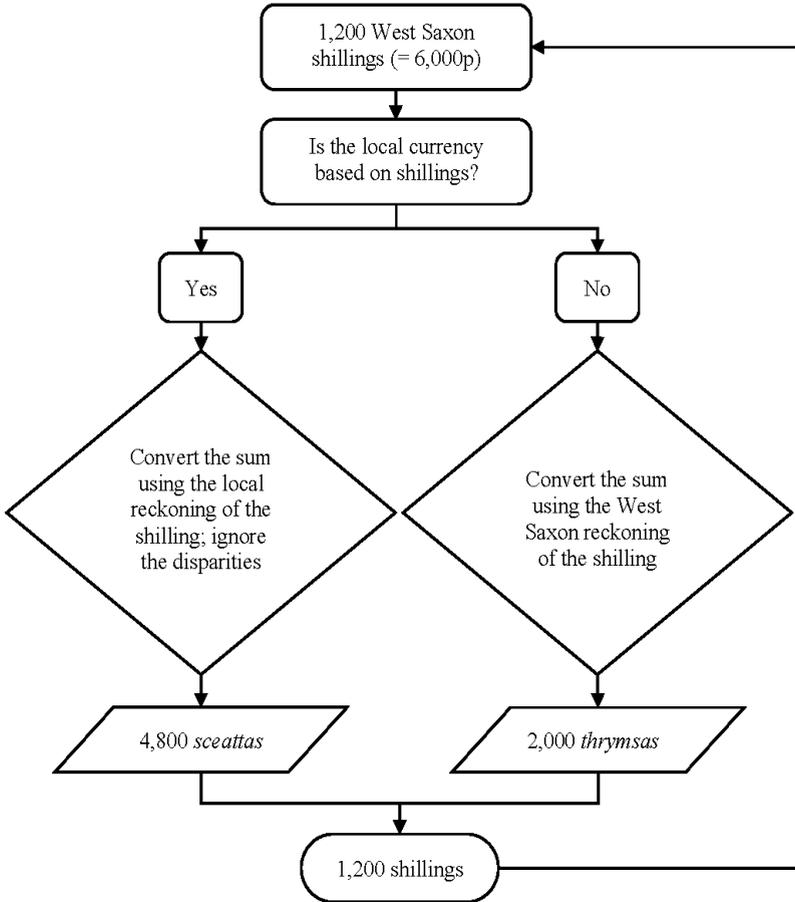


Figure 5. The possible logic of the author of the NL and the ML, when calculating the wergilds