

An Unrecorded Variety for the Moneyer Ceolbald in Æthelred I of Northumbria's Second Reign

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As discussed in Arthur Gran's excellent 2019 BNS note on the subject (Gran 2019) there are currently five moneyers known in the sceatta coinage struck for King Æthelred I of Northumbria's second reign (c. 790-796). These are; Ceolbald, Cuthberht, Cuthgils, Hnifula and Tidwulf (Gran 2019, 1). Of these, Ceolbald is by far the most prolific (Booth 1987, 70). A total of ten varieties are currently known for his issues, these originally set out by Booth (1987, 77-79) and further refined in Sceatta List (Abramson 2021). These are based on the appearance of the central design on both obverse/reverse and initial mark. However, the spelling of Ceolbald's name also differs in some cases.

Within the scope of this brief note, we are concerned directly with variety Va. Usual examples of this type issued by Ceolbald (Fig. 1) correspond to the following description;

Obverse: +AEDILRED, inscription surrounding central rosette. **Reverse:** +CEOLBALD, inscription surrounding central rosette. Initial mark; cross pattée C.f SCBI 69, 880. Sceatta List 80-50, North 185, Spink 856.



Fig. 1: A typical example of variety Va. PAS FAKL-DD7752 (this coin), found Market Weighton, E. Yorks. Image courtesy PAS.

In October of 2021 the author became aware of a coin (Fig. 2) which is probably best described as a sub-type of variety Va, duly described below. It is suggested this be designated Va(i). Previously in the collection of Dr Ron Bude, its provenance beyond this is unknown.

Obverse: +AEDILRED, inscription surrounding central rosette. **Reverse:** +CELBAOLD, inscription surrounding central rosette. Initial mark; cross pattée. Sceatta List -, North -, Spink -.



Fig. 2: The newly recognised sub-type Va(i). Diameter: 12.5mm. Weight: 0.9g. Image by author.

Interestingly, the letter 'O' on the reverse of this new piece is not the usual letter punch. Rather, it seems to be that of a pellet-in-annulet or rosette, somewhat crammed in between the adjoining 'A' and 'L'. This motif is typically utilised to form the central obverse/reverse designs on Northumbrian sceattas. The author suggests that this newly observed variety may represent a mistake by the original die sinker. Having rendered the first part of the moneyer's name correctly and lacking the room to add a normal-sized letter 'O' in its proper form, they evidently elected to fill the gap (and simultaneously make an attempt to rectify the problem) by incorporating the smaller decorative pellet-in-annulet/central rosette punch within the reverse legend. Die-sinker 'errors' or inconsistencies in spelling are by no means unknown in Æthelred I's sceatta coinage. Variety VII (Sceatta List 80-90) renders his name as **CEOLBAED** (C.f SCBI 69, 882-883), while coins of VIIIa (Sceatta List 80-100) demonstrate a retrograde 'D' in **CEOLBALD** (C.f SCBI 69, 885). On the two coins discussed by Gran in his note (2019), it appears as **CEOTBAD**.

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