

STUDIES IN EARLY MEDIEVAL COINAGE VOLUME 1

TWO DECADES OF DISCOVERY

Edited by
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Series X and Coin Circulation in Ribe

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Since the early 1970s more than 200 sceattas have been excavated in Ribe (Bendixen 1981; 1994; Feveile 2006b). In 1984, at a time when only c.30 sceattas had been found in Ribe, Metcalf (1984) proposed that the series X – otherwise known as Wodan/Monster – might have been minted in or near Ribe. Metcalf has since elaborated his arguments (1993) supported by the many sceattas that are continuously being found in Ribe. Some scholars have opposed his idea, maintaining the traditional opinion that the Wodan/Monster was minted in the Frisian area (Malmer 2002 with earlier reference; Jonsson & Malmer 1986), while others have been almost neutral on the subject (Op den Velde & Klaassen 2004; Hatz 2001).

The purpose of this paper is to disseminate the knowledge of the find situation in Ribe, the stratigraphical position of the coins within the many thousand archaeologically recorded layers, and their relative and absolute chronological dating. I would like to point to some possible explanations, and propose how we all – archaeologists, historians and numismaticians – together can take part in a fruitful exchange of thoughts and theories on this exciting group of finds from old Ribe: the 8th-century Wodan/Monster sceattas.

RIBE FROM THE 8TH TO THE 12TH CENTURY

The oldest part of Ribe was situated on the north and east bank of the River Ribe, while from the end of the 11th century the town centre was situated on the south-west bank of the River Ribe. North-east of the river the landscape was dry, sandy and mostly flat, c.3–4 metres above sea level; however, a few small areas were up to 6 metres above sea level.

Recent geological research shows a layer of drifting sand in an area of c.6000 m² dating from around the birth of Christ (C14) covering a plough-layer with traces of furrow (aridmarks) from the pre-roman Iron Age or earlier (Dalsgaard 2006; Aaby 2006). Consequently the market place was established on top of a natural sand bank several hundred years old and not, as has previously been described, on a man-made layer of sand (Jensen 1991; Feveile 1994). The course of the river in the 8th–12th centuries is not known precisely.

In an area c.200 metres long and 80 metres wide along the river solid culture layers up to c.2 metres deep have been investigated. The layers, consisting of workshop floors, fireplaces, waste layers, etc, contain tens of thousands of archaeological objects documenting an extensive production of crafts (bead maker, bronze caster, amber polisher,

comb manufacturer, shoemaker, potter) as well as import and trade (raw materials for the craftsmen, ready-made goods such as Frankish ceramics and hollow glass, volcanic basalt, Scandinavian soapstone, whetstones of slate, whalebones and glass beads from the Middle East). The oldest culture layers, which can be dated back to the period 704-10, derive from market place activity, the organization of which is not precisely known. After relatively few years the market place is organized in a row of plots c.6-8 metres wide and probably up to c.20-30 metres long placed at right angles to the river. Probably there have been around 40-50 plots in all. The individual plots are separated by shallow, narrow ditches, in some places with preserved wattle work along the edges. The basic structure exists unaltered for the next c.150 years with only small adjustments of the plot boundaries etc. Until c.770-80 to all appearance the use of the market place has been seasonal. Therefore no housing constructions are found on the plots, only a few pit-houses, wells and what appear to have been shelters etc. This, however, changes in so far as at the latest from c.770-80 traces are found indicating that the plots have been used throughout the year. Until now the excavations in Ribe have given no synonymous answers as to what the shape and size of these houses were, but it must be presumed that we are dealing with constructions like those known from other contemporary market places in Scandinavia: Hedeby, Birka and Kaupang. The growth of the layers stops around the middle or second half of the 9th century for unknown reasons. The next finds made in the market place area are traces of buildings from the high Middle Ages, the 12th-13th centuries and later in the form of post holes, pits etc.

The course of the river in the 8th–9th centuries is not known precisely and correspondingly no archaeological investigations have been carried out in order to investigate the look of the harbour area.

Behind the area with plots, in many small- and large-scale excavations traces of settlements in the form of pit houses, post-built houses, wells, fences and road systems have been found (Fig. 1a). It is essential to notice that to no degree worth mentioning are culture layers preserved outside the market place area. Consequently we are dealing with area excavations where only the features buried in the ground have been preserved. Among the best-documented features are some post-built houses from the second half of the 8th century and the beginning of the 9th century. They are of the same shape and size as those known from contemporary rural settlements in Jutland. The extent of the excavated area, however, has been so small that there exists no clear evidence of how the settlement was organized and whether it had a farm-like structure or a more dense town-like structure. The material found in the settlement clearly indicates a connection with the market place as to a certain degree traces of craft production and trade are also found in the majority of the excavations outside the area with the workshop plots.

It must be emphasized that it is not clear that permanent settlement dating from the first half of the 8th century has been found; however, this might be found in a number of undated settlement traces. At the same time it is also essential to notice that there are only a few single finds of objects from the 10th century and most of the 11th century, whereas there are absolutely no real constructions in the form of, for example, houses, wells etc.

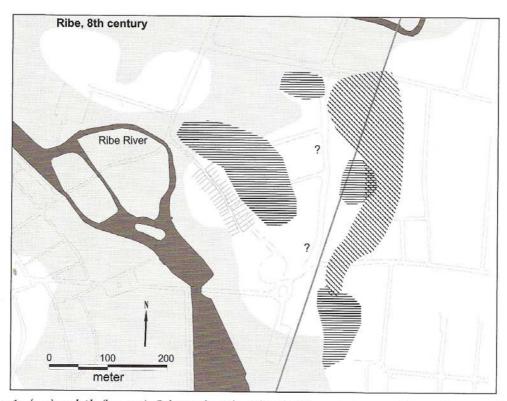
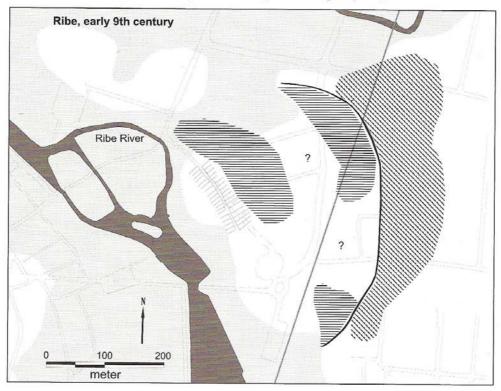


Fig. 1a (top) and 1b (bottom), Ribe in the 8th and early 9th centuries, superimposed on a modern streetmap. Thin line: the market place divided into plots. Horizontal hatching: areas where settlement is known. Diagonal hatching: area with graveyard(s).



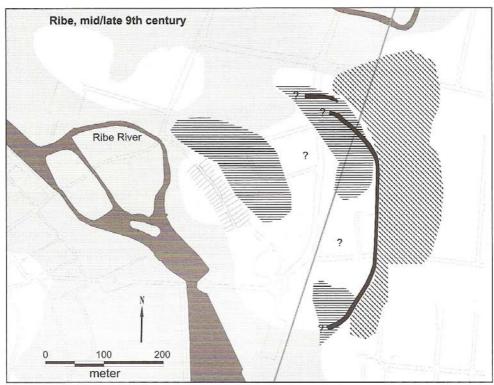


Fig. 1c, Ribe in the mid/late 9th century, superimposed on a modern streetmap. Thin line: the market place divided into plots. Horizontal hatching: areas where settlement is known. Diagonal hatching: area with graveyard(s).

Around 47 graves From the 8th–11th century have been investigated. They are all situated in a large peripheral area to the east and the north of the settlement. The graves have been investigated in five separate excavations, but there is hardly any doubt that originally they formed part of one big or several large graveyards. The majority of the graves, c.33, can be dated back to the 8th and 9th centuries. Apart from two graves – both inhumation graves with children – they are poorly equipped cremation graves. The majority are without grave goods, while in some graves there are a few grave goods in the form of, for example, glass beads, iron items etc. One individual cremation grave from the 8th century contained fragments of riding equipment, while another grave from the 9th century contained a Frankish sword mount of gilded silver. Fourteen inhumation graves can probably be dated back to the 10th–11th centuries.

In the beginning of the 9th century a ditch was dug around Ribe, c.2 metres wide and 1 metre deep (Fig. 1b). In several excavations the ditch was clearly shown to form the border between the developed area on the inside and undeveloped area or graveyard on the outside. The ditch is so slight that it cannot be a fortification. Instead it was of symbolic nature and merely marked the town limits. The ditch, which demarcates an area of c.12 hectares, is well defined towards the east, while its northern and possible western course is not known. Consequently it is not known whether the ditch turns back into Ribe River, thus forming a semi-circle, or whether the ditch stops at the low-lying, wet area to the north

of the market place. During the second half of the 9th century or probably at the latest around the beginning of the 10th century the town ditch in more or less the same place is substituted by a flat-bottomed moat 6–7 metres wide and 1 metre deep with traces of a bank on the inside (Fig. 1c).

The archaeological evidence of an active and impressive market place of the 8th and 9th centuries is overwhelming and there can be no doubt about the appearance of a medieval town at the end of the 11th century but there are almost no certain archaeological traces from the *c*.150–200 years in between. Consequently the understanding of Ribe so far as a well-established urban society existing from the beginning of the 8th century, through the Viking age and into the medieval period has to be revised (Feveile 2006b; Sindbæk 2005, 166ff). Like a number of other market places, Ribe was reduced considerably in size and importance during the second half of 9th century – maybe it even disappeared, becoming re-established at the end of 11th century.

THE POST OFFICE EXCAVATION 1990-91

Among the many excavations which have taken place at the market place in Ribe since the 1970s the excavation at the Post Office in 1990-91 is one of the most important, in so far as it has been possible to divide the many hundreds of layers into a series of phases, A-J, which have been dated through relative and absolute chronology (Feveile 2006c; Feveile & Jensen 2000) (Fig. 2). Phase A and AA are natural layers, which are hundreds of years older than the market place. Phases B-I represent the market place period from c.705 to c.850, and phase I contains medieval constructions from the 12th to the 13th century. Phase B and the early part of phase C can be dated by the use of dendrochronology - which secures a very precise dating. The end of phase C as well as the later phases (D-J) did not contain preserved wood suited for dendrochronological dating. Here the duration of the various phases have been established through a subjective estimation, while the dating of the phases is related to the combination of artefacts present (Fig. 3). Consequently it is not possible to make

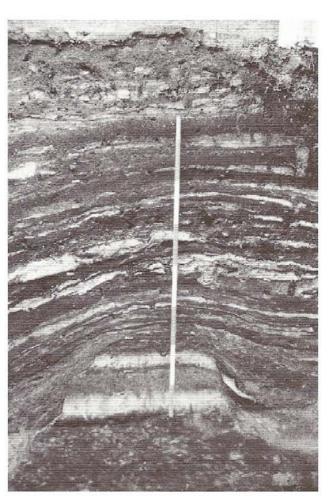


Fig. 2, ASR 9 Post Office. Profile with several hundreds of layers, covering the period c. AD705–AD850 .

			Coins	Coins etc.						Mould fragments Oval brooches							
	Phases		Daring Dirhems, arabic	Pennies, Malmer KG5-6	Byzantine lead seal c. 840	Muschelgruss	Badorf	Reliefband	Ørsnæs type N	Ribe 9	Berdal brooch	Equal-armed brooch	Round brooch	Sword-guard-shaped brooch	Retangular brooch	Phases	
	J	1213. Cent.				1					3			- 0,	_	J	
e e	H/I	820-850		7	1	21	17	5			161	11	2	1	19	H/I	
Viking Age	G	800-820				37	2	2		1	120	40	9	4	3	G	
	F	790-800				45	2			12	81	2	2			F	
0	Е	780-790	> 4			33				11	2					E	
anic	D C B	760-780				5			3						144000	D	
Late ermar on Ag	С	725-760							12							С	
Late Germanic Iron Age	В	705-725														В	
	A AA														,	A AA	

a dating more precise than $c.\pm 10$ years. If an adjustment of the dating is necessary, a couple of the phases could be made younger, especially from phase E and later. An older dating for these phases, on the other hand, is impossible. This would imply that the dating of several groups of artefacts in Ribe is earlier than anywhere else in north western Europe.

SCEATTAS FOUND IN DENMARK

A total of more than 300 sceattas have been found in and around Denmark (Bendixen 1981; 1984; 1994; Calmer 1984; Feveile 2001; 2006b; V. Hatz 1985; Jørgensen 2003; Pedersen 1997) (Fig. 4 and Fig. 5). By far the largest amount of sceattas has been found in the south-west of Jutland, and until now 216 sceattas have been found in or near Ribe. In Ribe all the coins have been found in single context, but it cannot be ruled out that the 10 sceattas (and two denaries and one triens) found at Dankirke could be part of two small hoards (Feveile 2006a). The other very important find on the west coast of Jutland, the Föhr-treasure, consisting of a total of 87 coins, also belongs to the group of hoards. Only a handful of sceattas come from the rest of Denmark. These finds contain between one to three coins on archaeologically well-known sites of a special status: Tissø, Gudme, Åhus, Hedeby, Shuby and Holmsland Klit.

SCEATTAS FROM RIBE

So far 204 sceattas have been found spread over a number of excavations in Ribe (Fig. 6). We talk about a rather limited number of types, forming a homogeneous picture in the different excavations. The predominant type is the Wodan/monster-sceattas (85%). The second most predominant type is the Porcupine-sceatta (11%), followed by Continental

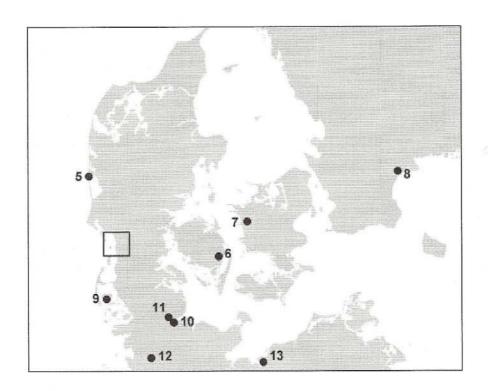
			Stone			Glass	beads						
				Whet	stone						6 0	6	
	Phases	Dating	Soap stone	Violet	Eidsborg	Blue melon-shaped beads	Blue polyedric beads	"Ribe" beads	Wasp beads	Metalfoiled, segmented beads	Green lead glass beads	Drawn beads	Phases
	J	1213. Cent.			14								J
D		200 050	- 00					7		8	6	53	H/I
/iking Age	H/I	820-850	22	4									
Viking Age	G	800-820	2	2				1	1	48	15	15	G
500	F	790-800							11	55	36	2	F
	E	780-790					1		91	6	4		E
nic ge	D	760-780				3	4	4	2				D
Late srman on Ag	C	725-760				17	30	107	12	II.			С
Late Germanic Iron Age	В	705-725				*32	4	23					В
	A AA												A AA

Fig. 3, Table of Chronology with different groups of artefacts.

Runic (2%). The remaining three types are each represented by only one coin. Finally 11 coins are in such a poor state of preservation that the only possible identification is that they are 'sceattas'. The exact state of preservation is of great importance, and unfortunately this is of a very varied quality! The composition and condition of the layers of soil have contributed to an extremely strong corrosion of the coins. A well-preserved sceattas normally weighs around 1 gram, but most often the corroded coins in Ribe weigh less than half a gram and only very few weigh around 1 gram. When found the majority of the coins are corroded into pure metal salts without any trace of metallic material. Through a process of preservation often involving electrolysis these silver salts have again precipitated, whereby a fairly stable surface has been created. These conditions make it impossible to obtain a real impression of the original weight of the coins, just as there is no simple way of identifying the original alloy. Finally the varying quality of the coins means that it is extremely difficult to work with die identification of the coins. Far too many of them are so badly preserved either on both or one of the sides that presumably they are of no great value for further die studies.

While the coins from Ribe are not suited for die studies, the unusually well-stratified conditions offer a possibility for a closer look at the time-related distribution of the coins through the 8th century (Fig. 7). Here especially the Post Office excavation (ASR 9) is suited, in so far as in this excavation it has been possible to divide the layers of soil into a number of phases, as mentioned above.

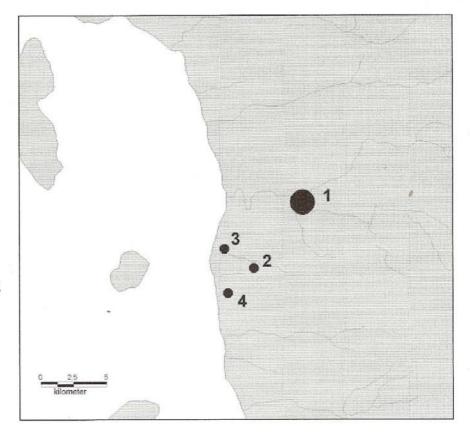
As revealed, 37 Wodan/Monster-sceattas and 9 of other types can be placed within one phase according to stratigraphy corresponding to respectively 81 and 19%, which is close to the proportional figure which also applies for the total number of sceattas in Ribe. Another



Top and Right: Fig. 4, Findplaces with sceattas.

- 1) Ribe
- 2) Dankirke
- 3) Okholm
- 4) Gl. Hviding 5) Holmsland Klit
- 6) Gudme
- 7) Tissø
- 8) Åhus
- 9) Föhr

- 10) Hedeby 11) 'near' Hedeby 12) Krinkberg 13) Gross Strömkendorf.



8 coins can be placed within two or three phases. However, it is important to recognize that a very marked change takes place in the composition of types at the latest from the beginning of phase C, that is c.725 (dendrochronology). While in phase B there are 8 (66%) non-Wodan/Monster and 4 (33%) Wodan/Monster, the proportion changes clearly from phase C, in so far as in the phases C-G there are only 2 non-Wodan/Monster (5%) but 39 (95%) Wodan/Monster. This is an almost complete loss of Wodan/Monster-sceattas over a period of 80–100 years. And the exact period of loss is one of the other important results that such a well-stratified excavation can highlight further: Wodan/Monster-sceattas are circulating and being dropped in Ribe constantly all the way up until the beginning of the 9th century! At the same time it is revealed that the number of coins lost per year is not radically different through the 8th century; obviously it first decreases markedly in phase G. It is not a new fact that Wodan/Monster-sceattas, according to the stratigraphy at the Post Office excavation, were in circulation throughout the second half of the 8th century. In 1989 the coins from another excavation in Ribe (ASR 7 Sct Nicolajgade 8 (='Ribe II') were presented (Frandsen 1989, p. 40). It was then concluded that sceattas continued to be in use and to be dropped a long time after what is normally considered to be their minting period.

During the last 15 years, no fewer than 9 denars from the 9th century have been found at excavations in Ribe, including 7 at the Post Office excavation phase H/I (Fig. 7). A couple of the 9 coins can be identified without problems, but the other coins can only be identified with great difficulty. All coins belong to Malmer's group KG5–6, the type with a frontal face on one side and a deer on the other.

Consequently it can be concluded that there has been a widespread use of sceattas at the market place in connection with the trading of goods. In the earliest phase B the sceattas consisted of a number of types, primarily Continental Runic, Porcupine and Wodan/Monster. At the latest from the beginning of phase C, i.e. c.725, the number of types in use declines, so that from now on only Wodan/Monster-sceattas are being used and dropped. Wodan/Monster-sceattas continue to be in use largely to the same extent throughout the 8th century, right to the beginning of the 9th century. In other words sceattas continue to be in use for period of about 50 years after they are considered (by some scholars) to have gone out of use. The coins are changed from c.820, where the older sceattas are replaced by denars with a quite different coin flan. The type used in Ribe is the one with a face/deer motif inspired by the older Wodan/Monster-sceattas. No Carolingean coins have ever been found in or near Ribe.

COIN CIRCULATION IN FRIESLAND

It is a matter of opinion when the sceattas were circulating in the area which is now Holland (from now on referred to as the high-Frisian area). Traditionally the upper time limit is in the mid- 8th century. This theory is based on the assumption that large parts of (or all of) the high-Frisian area were under Frankish control, not only in name but also in fact. Furthermore it is assumed that the coin reform of Pippin the Short in the 750s was successful, i.e. sceattas were no longer being minted or used, and the currency in the second half of the 8th century was mainly made up of Pippin's reformed denars.

Findplace	Mer.	D	Е	G	J	х	"Insular" X	Unique	Star of David	Interlace	Sceat	Total
Ribe		4	22		1	164	3	1		1	8	204
Dankirke	na-cus	2	1		2	5						10
Okholm			1			1						2
Gl. Hviding		1										1
Holmsland Klit						1						1
Gudme		1	1									2
Tissø		1										1
Åhus						3						3
Föhr	10		53	2	3				18	1		87
Hedeby						2						2
Near Hedeby			1									1
Krinkberg	0					1						1
Gross Strömkendorf						3						3
Total	10	9	79	2	6	180	3	1	18	2	8	318

Fig. 5, Sceattas from Denmark og tilstødende områder. Classified by type and distribution in relation to the findplace.

A number of scholars questions whether the Carolingians had any control at all over large parts of the high-Frisian area already from the mid-8th century. Maybe this was not the case until the last decade of the 8th century. If the latter is correct, it offers the possibility of a 'prolonged' period of minting and circulation of scatters also in large parts of the high-Friesian area – a theory that has been put forward several times previously (Callmer 1984, p. 23ff; Lafaurie 1969, p. 144; Knol 1993, table 23). One argument against such a late circulation of sceattas is the lack of hoards with a combination of sceattas and reformed coins from the second half of the 8th century (Bendixen 1981, p. 75). At first this might seem strange, but it must be remembered that we can never know the reasons for the composition of a hoard. The hoards might reflect specific political, economic, social or ethnical relations or even a combination of these. Furthermore, the fact that Carolingian coins were only to a very limited extent in circulation in the high-Frisian area cannot be denied (see below).

It is not possible within the range of this paper to go into specific detail about the complicated circumstances we might see reflected in the composition of the hoards. Instead I will limit myself to a few examples where single found coins can shed some light on the composition of the coins in the high-Frisian area in the 8th century – and maybe hint at their period of circulation.

First and foremost it is a fact that Wodan/Monster-sceattas only form a small part of the total amount of sceattas found in the high-Frisian area, especially when the hoards are not included. In Domburg c.12% of the sceattas are Wodan/Monster, in Dorestad c.5% and in Wijnaldum c.9% (Metcalf 1984; Op den Velde & Klaassen 2004; Pol 1999). Malmer emphasizes that Friesland is still the region where the largest number of Wodan/Monster-sceattas have been found, when the number of coins from the hoards are also included (Malmer 2002, p. 118). However, I doubt the advisability of using the number of different types of coins in the hoards as a means of illustrating a more general situation. One single hoard can change the picture entirely, and as stated above, we have no possibility of knowing the reasons for the composition of a hoard. The single lost and found coins are much better and more reliable evidence of what types of coins were in common use in a

certain location. Of course the number of individual finds plays a role, but look at Ribe as an example. Metcalf was right back in the 1980s when he estimated the composition of sceattas in Ribe from only the first 30 single finds of sceattas. Now more than 200 sceattas still give exactly the same general picture.

If one takes a closer look at the single found coins from the 8th century in the northern part of Holland an interesting picture appears. At Wijnaldum, about 180 coins have been found through the years ranging from the 1st century AD to the 15th century AD. The most recent finds derive from a large excavation which took place in the early 1990s (Van der Fin 1999; Pol 1999). Pol divides the early medieval coins into a number of shorter periods. The 8th century is divided into two groups 'Merovingian period – second phase (silver) 675–750' and 'Carolingian period (750–900)'.

Thirty-eight coins are ascribed to the period 675-750. The main part consists of Continental Runic and Porcupine, while there are only 4 Wodan/Monster coins (c.11%) - in other words corresponding to what is normally seen in this region. In the following period, 750-900, there are only 17 coins - and the oldest among these is a Karl the Great coin minted between 793 and 812. There are no Carolingian coins from the second half of the 8th century. A similar composition of coins can also been seen if we take a closer look at the coastal areas in northern Holland (Knol 1993, Table 23). If the hoards and Wijnaldum are excluded from the list published by Knol, we see a division of coins similar to that of Wijnaldum: some Continental Runic and Porcupines, a few Wodan/Monster and no coins from Pippin the Short or Carl the Great prior to 793 (Fig. 8). The question is, of course, where are the coins from the second half of the 8th century? If one looks at the continuous list of medieval coins covering several centuries, the coins from exactly the second half of the 8th century are missing. It is hardly reasonable to imagine that people in Wijnaldum and more generally in northern Holland during the second half of the 8th century suddenly had a markedly different way of using coins than both before and after this period. Knol solves this dilemma by dating the sceattas - or at least their period of circulation - throughout the 8th century in his Table 23. I agree with Knol, and would suggest that sceattas - especially Porcupines – continued to be in use (and also minted?) in the second half of the 8th century in northern Holland.

Fig. 6, Sceattas excavated in Ribe. Classified by type and distribution in relation to the excavations.

	x	E	D	"Insular" X	Interlace	BMC 37 J	Unique	Sceat	Total
1970ties ("Ribe I")	25	5						2	32
ASR 7 ("Ribe II")	31	1			1			1	34
ASR 9 Post Office	43	4	4			1	1	1	54
ASR 926	1								1
ASR 951	17	7		1					25
ASR 1077	6							1	7
ASR 1085	7	2							9
ASR 1357	33	3		2			L	3	41
ASR 2087	1								1
Total	164	22	4	3	1	1	1	8	204

% of type-identified (196) 84% 11% 2% 2% 0,5% 0,5% 0,5%

Phase	Dating	W odan/monster	Porcupine	Continental Runic	BMC 37 Series J	Unique	Sceat	Pennies KG 5-6	Dirh ems	Roman
Jden fas	е									
J	1213. cent.									
H /I	820-850							7		
G	800-820	2 1								
F	790-800	5	>-							
E	780-790	6							4 - 7	
D	760-780	6	1							
С	725-760	17					1		12	1
В	705-725	4	3	3	1	1				
Α		-								

Fig. 7, ASR 9 Post Office. The stratigraphic and chronological distribution of the coins.

SOME POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

The find picture in Ribe – with the completely overwhelming predominance of Wodan/Monster-sceattas throughout the period c.720/25–800/20 – and the find picture appearing among the single found coins in northern Holland give rise to some questions and possible explanations.

1. Assumption: By the mid-8th century, sceattas cease to be minted as well as to be in circulation in the high-Frisian area. The Carolingian empire is in political and economic control of the area and in control of the minting in the region. The coins consist of Carolingian reformed coins. In Ribe the Wodan/Monster-sceattas are predominant, at the latest from c.725 until c.800/20.

Sceattas	Sceat	7		
	Series D	4	14	
	Series E	1	14	
	Series X	2		
Denar	Denar	5		
	Karl the great >793	4		
	Louis the Pious	19	36	
	Karl the Bold	3	30	
	Lothar I	4		
	Lothar II	1		
Solidus	"Munus Divinum"	9	11	
	No. Var.	2	TT	

Fig. 8, Single finds of coins from the 8th to the 9th centuries,
Northern Holland. Based on E.
Knol 1993, Table 23.

Within this scenario, I can only imagine that the Wodan/Monster-sceattas must have been minted in the Ribe area. Foreign currency has been excluded both before and after the coin reform in the 750s, no matter if we are dealing with other types of sceattas from the period c.720/25-750s or the reformed coins from the second half of the 8th century. The beginning of the issuing of the Wodan/Monsters must be dated to c.720.

I do not at all believe in the theoretical possibility of Wodan/Monster-sceattas being minted in the high-Friesian area in the first half of the 8th century, neither that is was the only currency used in Ribe before the reform, and continued to be so, *after* they had changed to new reformed coin types in the high-Frisian area. It would not have been possible to maintain a circulation of foreign 'out of stock' coins for almost 50 years. Likewise, I consider it only a theoretical possibility that a minting based on high-Frisian Wodan/Monster-coins was implemented in Ribe in the second half of the 8th century – in other words a situation where Wodan/Monsters were minted in the high-Frisian area *before* Pippin's reform and copied in the Ribe area later in the century.

2. Assumption: Sceattas continue to circulate in the high-Frisian area throughout the 8th century. The Carolingians do not obtain political and economic control of the area until the 790s.

Within such a scenario we could imagine that the Wodan/monster-sceattas like the Continental Runic and Porcupine could have been minted in the high-Frisian area. If so, one has to expect the same development in the high-Frisian area as in Ribe, i.e. that the Wodan/Monster-sceattas replaced the other two main types of sceattas no later than c.725, hence being the predominant coin type throughout the century. One would also expect a homogeneous find-picture in the high-Frisian area and in the south-west of Jutland. When you look at the number of single found coins and the distribution of these in the two areas mentioned this does not seem possible – quite simply, too few Wodan/monster-sceattas have been found as single finds in the Frisian area to establish them as having formed the majority of the coins circulating for a period of about 75 years, compared to the number of Continental Runic and Porcupines, which, as in Ribe, should only reflect coins dropped until at the latest c.725.

Another possibility is that the Wodan/Monster was – at least – minted in Ribe at the same time as the Porcupine, was the main type of currency in the high-Frisian area and continued to be in circulation there until the end of the 8th century.

Conclusion

In Ribe, the find situation and the chronology are unambiguous. The find picture repeats itself from excavation to excavation. The two general conclusions are not arguable: a) all in all, the number of Wodan/Monster-sceattas in Ribe is overwhelming and after c.725 almost predominant; b) the Wodan/Monster-sceattas are in circulation and dropped until c.800/20. The question remains whether the Wodan/Monster-sceatta is a locally minted coin and so the oldest coin not only in Denmark but in all of Scandinavia – not a coinage on its own premises but a coinage deeply depending on the close contacts to the Frisian trading network as a part of a north western European currency. Another crucial question

is the duration of the use of sceattas as a main coin type in the high-Frisian area. Maybe we ought to revise the traditional period of use in (large?) parts of the Frisian area, and extend it to cover the second half of the 8th century as well. This might not be a new idea – but Pippin's reform and the dominance of the Carolingians still haunt the picture. A lot of work remains to be done – and it is my personal conviction that a better understanding of the complicated relations in the 8th century can only be reached through a close collaboration between numismaticians, historians and archaeologists.

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