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A Striding Man from Tissø – a rare imitation of Charlemagne's Dorestad-coinage

Every year new finds add to the number of Viking-Age coins from Denmark. The coins appear as single finds often from settlement sites or in silver hoards, and many belong to basic types known and recorded in the Royal Collection of Coins and Medals in the National Museum. Exceptions do occur, however, and in 1995 an unexpected and extremely rare imitation or hybrid based on Charlemagne's Dorestad-coinage came to light during excavations on a Late Iron-Age/Viking-Age settlement site immediately west of Lake Tissø on Zealand.¹

The settlement covers approximately half a square kilometre along the shore of the lake (fig. 1). It was situated in a topographically well-defined area, which in the Viking Age would have been almost an island surrounded by water and wetlands. To the north and west extensive bogs made passage difficult, and Halleby Å, a river running through lake Tissø, formed a boundary to the south. The lower river course flows into the Storebælt, and the upper leads far into Zealand. The position of the settlement was well chosen from a transport point of view, and the surrounding wetlands offered good protection. A ford and at times a bridge over the Halleby Å were the only means of access by land to the settlement from the south, and possibly another bridge gave access from the north at Bulbrogård.

The first archaeological finds from Tissø were recorded more than 100 years ago. During gravel digging in 1856 on the east side of the lake just north of Sæby Church a stirrup was uncovered along with the remains of a skeleton in a rectangular stone cist. The burial was said also to have included an iron sword, and the find circumstances suggest that a man had been buried here some time during the first half of the 10th century, in

¹ Tissø, St. Fuglede parish, Holbæk county; National Museum Royal Collection of Coins and Medals, FP 5886. See Lars Jørgensen & Lisbeth Pedersen, *Vikinger ved Tissø. Gamle og nye fund fra et handels- og håndværkscenter*, *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* 1996, 22-36. See also Lars Jørgensen, *En storgård fra vikingetiden ved Tissø, Sjælland – en foreløbig præsentation*, in L. Larsson & B. Hårdh (eds.), *Centrala Platser – Centrala Frågor. Samhällsstrukturen under Järnåldern*. Acta Archaeologica Lundensia Series in 8°, No. 28 (Lund 1998), 233-248.



Fig. 1. The Tissø area on western Zealand. Drawing: Klaus Støttrup Jensen.

Fig. 1. Tissøområdet på Vestsjælland. Tegning: Klaus Støttrup Jensen.

accordance with a burial custom that appears mainly to have been practised in western Denmark.²

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries numerous attempts were made to lower the water table of the lake by about 1.5 to 2 metres. Large areas of the lake bottom were exposed revealing pieces of jewellery and iron tools, but especially swords, axes and spearheads. The oldest objects date from the 7th century AD, but most are from the Viking Age and the early Medieval period.

In the spring of 1977 a gold neck ring weighing almost two kilos, one of the largest gold treasures known from Denmark, was ploughed up in a field on the property of Kalmergården west of Lake Tissø. Further investigations were carried out in the area and a large number of objects dating from the late Iron Age and the Viking Age were recorded. Road works in 1979 next to the bridge across Halleby Å lead to a small-scale excavation just north of the river.³ Two male burials, C14-dated to the beginning of the 11th century, were uncovered. In each case the man had been executed and his head placed between his legs, circumstances which

² Cf. Anne Pedersen, Weapons and riding gear in burials – evidence of military and social rank in 10th century Denmark, in A. Nørgård Jørgensen & B. Clausen (eds.), *Military Aspects of Scandinavian Society in a European Perspective, AD 1-1300*. Publications from the National Museum Studies in Archaeology and History Vol. 2 (Copenhagen 1997), 123-135.

³ Pia Bennike & Jørgen Christoffersen, Et hoved kortere, *Skalk* 1981/3, 10-13.

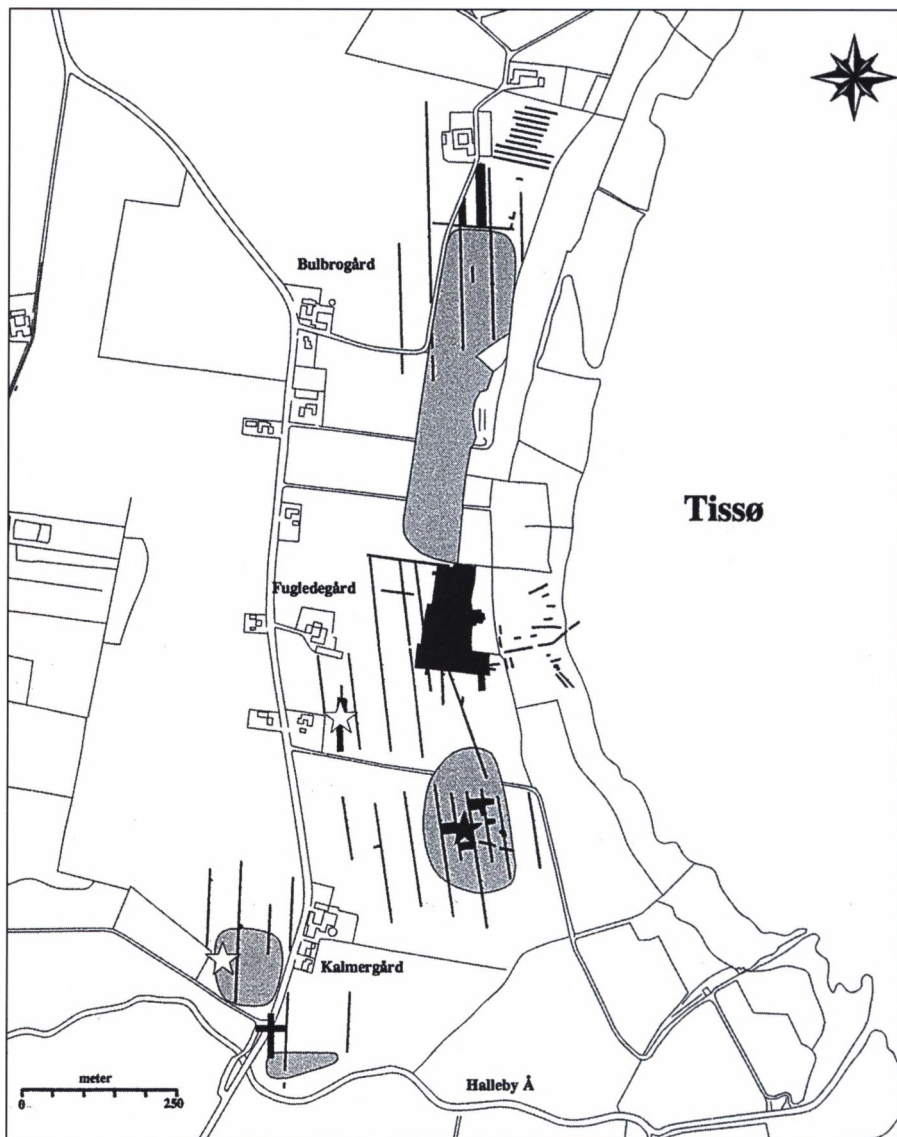


Fig. 2. The western side of Tissø with the extent of the excavated areas marked in black (as in 1997) and phosphate concentrations shaded. The map shows the distribution of hoards from the Viking Age (stars). The exact find spot for the gold neck-ring (black star) is uncertain. The cross north of Halleby Å represents the two executed men. Drawing: Klaus Støttrup Jensen.

Fig. 2. Vestsiden af Tissø med udgravningsområder angivet med sort (status 1997) og fosforsyrekoncentrationer skygget. Kortet viser fordelingen af skattefund fra vikingetiden (stjerner). Det nøjagtige fundsted for guldhalsringen (sort stjerne) er usikkert. Korset nord for Halleby Å repræsenterer de to hals-huggede mænd. Tegning: Klaus Støttrup Jensen.

indicate that these were not the graves of common men. Traces of structures on the site included the remains of a wooden bridge, and two Arabic coins minted in the early 9th century were located during the same excavation, confirming the date of activity at the site. Finally, in 1988 a small silver hoard consisting of two silver cups, one inside the other, a pendant and beads of silver and glass came to light at Kalmergård.

The variety as well as the quality of the finds all indicated a site of some importance at Tissø (fig. 2). In the following years metal-detector investigation in the area was intensified, and in 1995 the National Museum and the Kalundborg Regional Museum decided on a research project, intended to determine the extent and nature of the settlement as well as the range of activities in the area. Large-scale excavations and continued metal-detector scanning have yielded information about the general lay-out of farmsteads and the development of the settlement through time, but also an enormous increase in the number of finds. More than 5,000 single metal objects have been recorded, and they include unfinished products, models for jewellery and moulds, as well as many examples of fine workmanship, among them imported pieces of jewellery with gilding and inlay. Weights are common and may be linked to the use of precious metals on the site, mainly silver in the form of hack-silver, small ingots and coins. The many objects confirm the impression of an exceptionally wealthy settlement, that was occupied from about 500 AD until the first half of the 11th century when it appears to have been abandoned or possibly replaced by another site.

The coin

The new silver coin from Tissø was found in a midden dated to the 9th century, which had accumulated in a small hollow on the western side of the settlement, just south of the present Fugledegård. As with most coins from the site it is a single find and probably represents an accidental loss that ended up on the midden.

The coin measures *c.* 18 mm in diameter and weighs 0.73 g although incomplete. Traces of a suspension hole are preserved at one of the two damaged edges. In spite of the corrosion and signs of wear on the surface, the images on both sides stand out clearly (fig. 3). One side is an imitation of the obverse of Charlemagne's Dorestad issues from before *c.* 790 AD. The distorted version of the original two-line inscription CARO / LVS is combined with a crossed cross, a second figure resembling a fork with curved prongs, and a circle with an inscribed cross emphasized by pellets at the centre and at the four points of the cross on the circle. A row of small pellets is placed under the letter in the top line.



Fig. 3. Silver coin from Tissø, die-axis c. 90°. 2:1. Photo: Niels Elswing.

Fig. 3. Sølv mønt fra Tissø, stempelorientering ca. 90°. 2:1. Foto: Niels Elswing.

The opposite side depicts a male figure wearing a headdress or helmet and a belt of three horizontal bands. The face and the legs are viewed in profile and the whole figure gives an impression of movement towards the left. Both arms are raised, and the man holds a sword in his right hand. The sword is not raised against an opponent but held upright, the hand firmly gripping the blade or scabbard immediately below the lower guard. The area by the man's left hand is damaged, but it appears also to have held an object of some kind. The secondary images include a hammer-cross to the right of the man and a figure resembling a winged insect as well as an indistinct cross-like object to the left.

The coin belongs to the pictorial types in Brita Malmer's KG 3, and as yet only one other example of this type is known, a coin in the Staatliche Münzsammlung München, unfortunately without further information (fig. 4).⁴ The two coins were not struck from the same dies, but are nevertheless so similar, that the coin from München may serve to complete the missing parts of the one from Tissø. The composition of the reverses is next to identical, and it is very likely that the man on the Tissø coin wore a similar horned headdress and also carried two crossed objects in his left hand.

The CAROLVS sides of the coins show slight variations. On the coin from Tissø the misrepresentation of the joint letters AR in the top line and of the letter V in the bottom line confirm the origin of the motif. The first letter C is replaced by a figure, that may be interpreted as a bird with its slender wings spread out and the head turned downwards. The unusual motif is better preserved on the coin from München and appears to incorporate the L that should begin the last syllable of CAROLVS. The O on both coins is a very thin and small circle, to which has been added a cross on the coin from Tissø making it look like a wheel. The thin snake-

⁴ Brita Malmer, *Nordiska mynt före år 1000*. Acta Archaeologica Lundensia Series in 8°, No. 4 (Bonn/Lund 1966).



Fig. 4. Silver coin in the Staatliche Münzsammlung München, die-axis c. 90°. 2:1. Photo: Staatliche Münzsammlung, München.

Fig. 4. Sølvmynt i Staatliche Münzsammlung München, stempelorientering ca. 90°. 2:1. Foto: Staatliche Münzsammlung, München.

like S on the coin from München is almost horizontal but still recognizable; on the coin from Tissø the S is replaced by a crossed cross.

The two coins may be dated to the early 9th century and they are doubtless related to the other imitations of Charlemagne's early coinage, in spite of the fact that they differ in detail from most of them.⁵ The side with the striding man represents a unique composition, very different from most of the images on the Scandinavian imitations. The new coin from Tissø doubles the number of known dies, indicating that this type although apparently very rare and unusual was not a "once-only" issue.

The striding man

Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon coins minted in the 8th century have been suggested as possible prototypes for this coin.⁶ The main motif on for instance the reverse of several Anglo-Saxon sceattas is a standing male figure holding a cross on a staff in each hand (series L) or a cross in one hand and a bird in the other (series K).⁷ Unlike the male figure on the Tissø coin the figures on the sceattas wear a long dress or tunic, reaching below the knees. The two series are dated to c. 720-730/40 (K) and 730-740/60 (L).⁸

⁵ Brita Malmer, Eine einzigartige skandinavische Münze aus dem 9. Jahrhundert, in *Dona Nymismatica. Walter Hävernicks zum 23. Januar 1965 dargebracht* (Hamburg 1965), 55-58, Pl. V; with references.

⁶ Nils Ludvig Rasmusson, Kring de västerländska mynten i Birka, in *Från Stenålder till Rokoko, Studier tillägnade Otto Rydbeck den 25. Augusti 1937* (Lund 1937), 113-135; see also note 5, Malmer 1965.

⁷ See for instance D.M. Metcalf, *Thrymsas and Sceattas in the Ashmolean Museum Oxford*, Vol. 3 (London 1994), 402 ff.

⁸ Mark Blackburn, A chronology for the sceattas, in D. Hill & D.M. Metcalf (eds.), *Sceattas in England and on the Continent. The Seventh Oxford Symposium on Coinage and Monetary History*. BAR British Series 128 (Oxford 1984), 165-174.

Brita Malmer has pointed to yet another possible prototype, the reverse of a coin issued by Pepin.⁹ On this coin, a male figure holds a curved staff or crozier in one hand. The other hand is empty, but to the left is a free-standing cross on a staff. The man wears a short tunic leaving the legs free, and perhaps most significant he wears a broad belt with three bands similar to the one worn by the figure on the coin from Tissø. The obverse of the Pepin coin provides another possible link between these coins, in that the horizontal composition of the inscription resembles that on the early Carolingian coinage. The secondary images include an axe, the symbol of Dorestad, which was also used on later coins, the prototypes of many Scandinavian CAROLVS-Dorestad imitations.

Without finding an exact parallel, the figure of a striding man may thus be related to human figures on Anglo-Saxon sceattas and early Carolingian coins. A walking or standing man even occurs on some roughly contemporary imitations of solidi among the issues of Louis the Pious (814-840).¹⁰ One very important difference is, however, that none of these figures wears a horned headdress. The combination of objects held by the figure on the Tissø and München coins, a sword and two crossed staves, is also unusual, and it is therefore worth considering whether the prototypes or inspiration for the main motif may not be found within other groups of objects rather than among the earlier coinages. P. Hauberg was unable to find any parallels in 1900, but a few decades later C.A. Nordman pointed to several possibilities and since then the archaeological source material from the late Iron Age and the early Viking Age has steadily increased.¹¹

To sum up, the most characteristic elements on the reverse of the two coins from Tissø and München are:

- A male figure in a walking, rather than standing position.
- A sword held in the man's right hand. On the coin from München the sword is clearly depicted with a triangular pommel, a type that was common in the late Iron Age and early Viking Age.
- Two crossed staves held in the left hand.
- A belt made up of three bands.
- A helmet or headdress with two horn-like extensions.

A survey of the finds from the Late Germanic Iron Age in Scandinavia has yielded many definite parallels to this image, objects that either repeat the exact same features in full figure or only include part of the motif, for instance the head with its characteristic headdress. The geo-

⁹ Cf. note 5, Malmer 1965, 56.

¹⁰ Cf. note 4, Malmer 1966, 59.

¹¹ P. Hauberg, *Myntforhold og Udmyntninger i Danmark indtil 1146* (Kjøbenhavn 1900), 106; C.A. Nordman, *Nordens äldsta mynt, Finskt Museum XXX*, 1923, 17 f. Cf. also note 5, Malmer 1965, note 5 with references.



Fig. 5. Top ornament of a copper-alloy pin from Tissø, front and back. 1:1. Photo: Kit Weiss.

Fig. 5. Topornament til smykkenål af bronze fra Tissø, for- og bagside. 1:1. Foto: Kit Weiss.

graphical distance to the nearest such find is very short, for the first parallel to the coin motif may be drawn from the Tissø settlement site. Among the small metal objects is a top mount for a dress pin made of copper alloy and shaped like a man's head equipped with a horned headdress (fig. 5). Another very similar figure dressed in a knee-length tunic was recently uncovered at Uppåkra in Skåne, a site very like Tissø.¹² Traces of iron in his closed fists indicate that he may have held weapons in both hands. The terminals of the horns on both figures are broken, but other finds give an idea of what they may have looked like.

The headdress of a better preserved copper-alloy object from the trading site of Staraja Ladoga in Russia is fitted with two bird's heads in a style associated with the 7th century AD (fig. 6). The figure was uncovered in cultural deposits dated to the second half of the 8th century AD and is thus earlier than the coin.¹³ The round eyes, long distinct nose and broad mouth are very like the face on the Tissø mount. Similar heads with the same features, but wearing a slightly smaller headdress, were used as decorative terminals on small utensils, for instance on the handles of tweezers found in 7th-century burials on the island of Gotland,¹⁴ but may also be an integral part of small objects. A casting mould and a lead model for such objects have been found in an 8th-century context in

¹² Anders Andrén, *Ekon av en centralplats, in Uppåkra. Rikedomar ur jorden. Utställningskatalog* (Lund 1998), 28-30.

¹³ Anatol N. Kirpichnikov, *Staraja Ladoga/Alt-Ladoga und seine überregionalen Beziehungen im 8.-10. Jahrhundert, Bericht der Römisch-Germanischen Kommission* 69, 1988, 307-337. Information on the style of the figure was kindly given by mag.art. Karen Høilund Nielsen.

¹⁴ See for instance Birger Nerman, *Die Vendelzeit Gotlands II. Tafeln* (Stockholm 1969), Taf. 123, nos. 1099-1101.



Fig. 6. Top ornament from Staraja Ladoga, Russia, 8th century AD. 1.5:1 (after Kirpičnikov 1988).

Fig. 6. Topornament fra Staraja Ladoga, Rusland, 8. årh. e.Kr. 1,5:1 (after Kirpičnikov 1988).

Ribe, a well-known site in southwest Denmark with evidence of far-reaching contacts.¹⁵ On the lead model the bird's heads are indistinct but the characteristic male head with a very prominent moustache and two large round eyes stands out clearly.

Decorated helmets from the Late Iron Age, c. 600 AD, provide other parallels to the coin motif. A striding man holding a staff or spear in one hand occurs behind a warrior on horseback in almost identical reliefs on two helmets from the boat graves nos. 7 and 8 uncovered at Valsgärde in Uppland, Sweden.¹⁶ The figure on the Valsgärde 8 helmet wears a three-banded belt. In the first reconstruction of the reliefs his headdress appears somewhat stylized with simple horn-like projections as on the coins, but later studies by Karl Hauck indicate that the headdress was similar to the more elaborate version on the helmet plates from Valsgärde 7 which show the curved extensions terminating in two small bird's heads (fig. 7).¹⁷ The man's face shows the typical round eyes and large moustache. A similar male figure equipped with helmet and weapons features

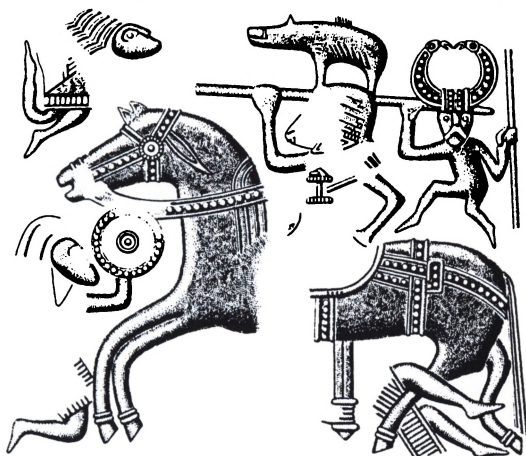
¹⁵ Stig Jensen, *Ribes Vikinger* (Ribe 1991), 33 f.

¹⁶ Greta Arwidsson, *Valsgärde 7. Die Gräberfunde von Valsgärde III* (Uppsala 1977), Abb. 25-26, Abb. 133; *ibid.* *Valsgärde 8. Die Gräberfunde von Valsgärde II* (Uppsala 1954), Abb. 79. See also Greta Arwidsson, *Båtgravarna i Valsgärde*, in *Vendeltid. Historia i Fickformat. Statens Historiska Museum* (Stockholm 1980), 45-64.

¹⁷ Karl Hauck, *Die Veränderung der Missionsgeschichte durch die Entdeckung der Ikonologie der germanischen Bildenden Künste, erhellt am Beispiel der Propagierung der Kampphilfen des Mars-Wodan in Alt-Uppsala im 7. Jahrhundert. Zur Ikonologie der Goldbrakteaten XX. Westfalen* 58, 1980. 291 ff.

Fig. 7. Helmet scene from Valsgärde 7, Uppland, Sweden (after Arwidsson 1980).

Fig. 7. Hjelmscene fra Valsgärde 7, Uppland, Sverige (after Arwidsson 1980).



on a copper-alloy die for the production of helmet plates found at Torslanda on the island of Öland in Sweden.¹⁸

The helmet plates show a similar combination of equipment to that seen on the coins: a belt consisting of several bands worn with a dress that leaves the legs free, a helmet or headdress with curved extensions meeting over the man's head, and one or two weapons. On the die mentioned from Torslanda the man carries a spear in each hand, and a sword with a triangular pommel hangs over his shoulder (fig. 8). The helmet is fitted with a long neck guard that may be compared to the shape of the helmet on the coins, but it shows greater detail.

Several identical warriors are depicted on a helmet from Vendel grave XIV, Uppland, and on another of the dies from Torslanda.¹⁹ These warriors are lined up in a procession, and although they have a far more massive body and lack the three-banded belt to hold the tunic, their posture is not unlike that of the striding man on the coins. The legs are depicted in profile lending movement to the figures and the upper body is viewed from the front. The warriors carry a spear in one hand and a sword in the other. The swords are held in the same way as seen on the coins, with one hand firmly gripping the scabbard below the sword guard. Instead of a helmet with two horns, the warriors wear a helmet with a single crest shaped like an animal or a bird.

A helmet from the Sutton Hoo boat grave in East Anglia, England is closely related to the Swedish examples, using similar motifs and com-

¹⁸ See Holger Arbman, *Båtgravarna i Vendel*, in *Vendeltid. Historia i Fickformat. Statens Historiska Museum* (Stockholm 1980), 25.

¹⁹ Cf. note 18, Arbman 1980, 24, 27.



Fig. 8. Copper-alloy die from Torslunda, Öland, Sweden (after Arbman 1980).

Fig. 8. Bronzematrice fra Torslunda, Öland, Sverige (efter Arbman 1980).

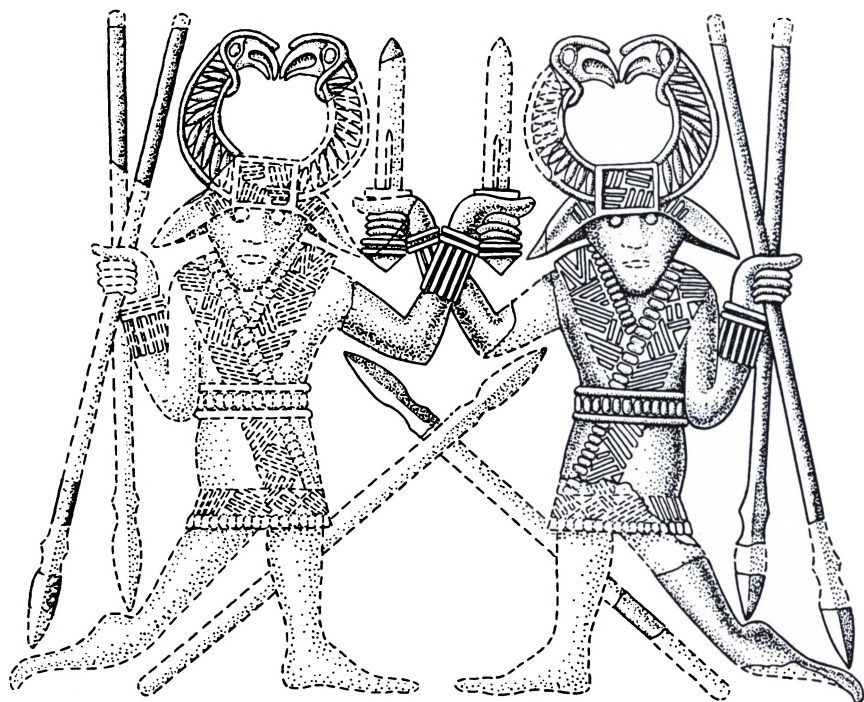


Fig. 9. Helmet scene from the Sutton Hoo ship burial, East Anglia, England. Heavy lines and shading show preserved details of two dancing warriors, broken lines indicate reconstructed parts of the design (after Bruce-Mitford 1978).

Fig. 9. Hjelmscene fra Sutton Hoo bådgraven, Østanglia, England. Optrukne linier og skyggelægning viser bevarede detaljer af to dansende krigere, stiplede linier markerer rekonstruerede dele af motivet (efter Bruce-Mitford 1978).

Fig. 10. Silver figure from Birka grave 571, Uppland, Sweden. Photo: Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet, Stockholm.

Fig. 10. Sølvmfigur fra Birka grav 571, Uppland, Sverige. Foto: Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet, Stockholm.



positions on the decorated copper-alloy plates.²⁰ In fragments of a warrior scene, parts of two figures are preserved, each wearing the same type of bird's head helmet with a long neck-guard, a branded sword with triangular pommel in one hand and two crossed spears in the other (fig. 9). A three-banded belt holds a short tunic together. Similar figures may be found on smaller objects in England and on the continent where they belong in a Germanic context.

In addition to these relief images, parallels to the coin motif include three-dimensional figures with the exact same composition. A female inhumation grave excavated at Birka in Uppland contained a cast ornament, probably an amulet, made of silver in the shape of a human figure wearing a long tunic and a horned helmet (fig. 10).²¹ The eyes are deep hollows, and the surface is decorated with small punched circles. In one hand the figure holds a sword with a triangular pommel, in the other a staff-like object, possibly a spear. The figure is small, only 2.9 cm tall, and an eye on the back indicates that it may have been used as a pendant. The other objects in the grave include a circular brooch of gilt copper alloy, needles of iron kept in a bone case, an antler comb, a knife and a

²⁰ Rupert Bruce-Mitford, *The Sutton Hoo Ship-Burial Volume 2. Arms, Armour and Regalia* (London 1978), 186-189.

²¹ Birka grave no. 571. Holger Arbman, *Birka I. Die Gräber* (Uppsala 1940-43), 185 f.

whetstone, as well as the remains of a woven band with silver thread. Similar brooches to the one in the grave occur in other burials in Birka containing Arabic coins from the early 10th century, giving an approximate date to the burial in the first half of the 10th century.²²

Another small figure of copper alloy came to light in 1968 in a cremation burial in the Ekhammer/Kungsängen cemetery, also in Uppland and like the Birka grave a female burial.²³ This 3 cm tall figure wears a horned headdress and a short tunic with a belt clearly made up of three bands (fig. 11). In one hand he holds a sword with a triangular pommel, in the other two crossed staves or spears. As already noted by the excavator Per-Olof Ringquist, these attributes are identical to the ones on the coin from München which also depicts short staves ending in a knob at either end.²⁴ The contents of the grave suggest a date in the early Viking Age, which fits well with the shape of the sword.

A scene in the woven tapestry from the Oseberg burial, excavated in 1904 in Vestfold, Norway, provides a final parallel to the coin motif. Among the many images in the tapestry is one figure who appears to be wearing a horned headdress.²⁵ Both arms are raised and bent. The right hand holds two objects, possibly two crossed staves, and in the left hand is a sword held just below the grip. The scene is incomplete and the tapestry is in poor condition, so that the exact shape of the headdress is uncertain, but it is very likely that a similar figure to the one depicted on the coins was intended, in this case participating in a large procession. In another scene depicting a sacred grove with dead men hanging from the trees a female figure presents a sword, holding it upright below the grip.²⁶ The felling-year for the timbers of the burial chamber in the Oseberg ship-burial has been dendrochronologically determined as 834 AD, giving a *terminus ante quem* for the tapestry. The ship itself is slightly earlier.²⁷

All these objects ranging from small copper-alloy ornaments and decorative helmet plates to the procession scene from Oseberg suggest that the

²² Ingmar Jansson, Grosse Rundspangen, in G. Arwidsson (ed.), *Birka II:1. Systematische Analysen der Gräberfunde* (Stockholm 1984), 75-84.

²³ Kungsängen, grave field no. 4, grave 6; Stockholm Näs parish, Uppland, Sweden.

²⁴ Per-Olof Ringquist, Två vikingatida uppländska människofigurer i brons, *Fornvännen* 64, 1969/4, 287-296.

²⁵ Sofie Krafft, *Fra Osebergfunnens tekstiler. Fragmenter af billedvev og silkestoffer med rekonstruerede mønstre* (Oslo 1955), 30. For a recent interpretation of the tapestry see Anne Stine Ingstad, The Interpretation of the Oseberg-find, in O. Crumlin-Pedersen & B. Munch Thye (eds.), *The Ship as Symbol in Prehistoric and Medieval Scandinavia*. Publications from the National Museum Studies in Archaeology and History Vol. 1 (Copenhagen 1995), 138-147.

²⁶ Cf. note 25, Krafft 1955, 35.

²⁷ Niels Bonde, De norske vikingeskibsgaves alder. Et vellykket norsk-dansk forskningsprojekt, *Nationalmuseets Arbejdsmark* 1994, 128-148.

Fig. 11. Copper-alloy figure from Ekhammar/Kungsängen, Uppland, Sweden. Photo: Nils Lagergren, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet, Stockholm.

Fig. 11. Bronzefigur fra Ekhammar/Kungsängen, Uppland, Sverige. Foto: Nils Lagergren, Antikvarisk-topografiska arkivet, Stockholm.



striding man with his characteristic attributes was a well-known figure in Scandinavia in the centuries from the Late Germanic Iron Age *c.* 600 AD continuing into the Viking Age.

The male figure on the small objects is most often referred to as the god Odin depicted with his two birds, Hugin and Munin. Not all agree with this interpretation, and for instance Greta Arwidsson does not find sufficient grounds to interpret the figure as one of the major gods in the pagan Nordic religion.²⁸ Nevertheless, it is possible that the figure should be viewed within a religious or mythological context, even if we cannot determine the nature or exact identity of the figure. The two small ornaments of silver and copper alloy from Uppland may have been worn as amulets.

The twin figures on the decorated helmet plates holding a sword and two spears/staves have been interpreted as dancing warriors enacting a ceremonial battle, and the term 'Sieghelfer', one who helps the warriors to victory, has been used for the small figure wearing a horned headdress next to the mounted warrior.²⁹ In this sense, the figures are not specific

²⁸ Cf. note 16, Arwidsson 1977; *ibid.* Verschiedene Schmuckgegenstände/Amulette in Form von Menschenfiguren, Reitern, Pferden, Vierfüßlern, Vögeln und Schlangen, in G. Arwidsson (ed.), *Birka II:3. Systematische Analysen der Gräberfunde* (Stockholm 1989), 55-62.

²⁹ Cf. note 17, Hauck 1980, 263 ff. Heiko Steuer, Helm und Ringschwert / Prunkbewaffnung und Rangabzeichen germanischer Krieger. Eine Übersicht, *Studien zur Sachsenforschung* 6, 1987, 189-236.

Nordic deities, but the scenes can be linked to pagan religious thought. Similarly, the figure carrying a sword and possible staves in the Oseberg tapestry appears not as the principal character, but as one among many participants in a large ceremonial procession which may be interpreted within a religious framework.

The helmets, although made with an iron inner structure, do not seem intended for use in real battle. Whether this was in fact the case is debated, but the helmets were doubtless highly visible symbols of dignity and rank worn only by distinguished male individuals in the social hierarchy. The scenes on the helmets, including the manner in which swords are held forward in an upright position indicating submission or homage paid by the warriors, support such an interpretation.³⁰ Throughout most of Germanic Europe swords and helmets were linked to power and the right to rule.

Archaeological evidence, as well as pictorial and written sources from the centuries prior to the minting of the coins with the striding man indicate the emergence of a society in which a warrior aristocracy played a decisive political and ideological role, and in which power was closely linked to religious beliefs.³¹ Military and political power was visually expressed in contemporary art at many levels such as on the helmets, and religious motifs served to legitimize and strengthen the position of the rulers. Considering the widespread use of the warrior motif and the possible interpretations of objects and scenes, it is very likely that the striding figure on the coin held a significance beyond that of an image simply adapted from a foreign coin to a new indigenous minting, and that its importance lay in the associations to religious beliefs and perhaps royal power linked to it.

The interpretation of the smaller, secondary motifs on the coins is more uncertain, and the meaning of the figure resembling an insect or a butterfly immediately left of the striding man is difficult to ascertain. These small images or symbols were probably placed on the coins with a definite purpose, but further research is necessary to be able to determine whether they have a symbolic meaning, possibly supplementing the main motif, or were related to the minting of the coins.

³⁰ Cf. note 29, Steuer 1987, 203.

³¹ See for instance Ulf Näsman, *Liv och död. Sydsandinaviska grav- och offerritter från 200 til 1000 e.Kr.*, in J.P. Schjødt et al. (eds.), *Myte og ritual i det førkristne Norden. Et symposium* (Odense 1995), 73-94.

Conclusion

The coin from Tissø represents an unusual combination of a well-known coin obverse combined with a reverse focussing on a striding man with a horned headdress and carrying a sword as the main motif. In view of the many other objects of varying size, material and character from Scandinavia depicting a similar male figure, it may be suggested that the coin represents yet another example of a popular motif being transferred to the new coinage in the early 9th century.

The prototype for one group of early Nordic coins, Brita Malmer's KG 5-6, is a sceat of the so-called Wodan-Monster type minted in the 8th century. Recent results from Ribe indicate that the chronological distance between the two coin types may be very short, as sceattas appear to have circulated or at least were present in Ribe beyond *c.* 750 AD.³² The motifs on both sides of the sceat are repeated on the larger Nordic coin. The actual size of the staring head on the obverse has hardly changed but it is surrounded by a frame with *inter alia* small masks. The mythical animal on the opposite side is slightly enlarged to fill out the greater space on the flan.

The origins of the characteristic head with the large round staring eyes and the animal motif on the Wodan-Monster sceat may again be sought in other media such as the metal ornaments. For the striding man there is no exact coin parallel although earlier or contemporary coins may have lent inspiration to the motif, and the obverse does in fact imitate an existing coin. It is therefore possible that the moneyers of the 9th century in this case sought direct inspiration from other crafts, such as the silver smith or the bronze caster, without, however, copying the exact style of other media. The adaptation of not only a well-known motif but one with a specific religious or ideological significance may have strengthened the monetary value of the coins, which were still in very limited use in many areas of Scandinavia.

It is still far too early to determine where in Scandinavia the Tissø coin was minted, but it is suggestive that a coin depicting a possible mythological figure was found in a wealthy settlement next to lake Tissø, the name of which derives from Tyr, the warrior god of the Vikings.

³² Claus Feveile & Stig Jensen, *Sceattasfundene fra Ribe – nogle arkæologiske kendsgerninger*, *NNUM* 1993/5, 74-80.

En gående mand fra Tissø. En sjælden efterligning af Karl den Stores ældre Dorestad-mønt

Antallet af møntfund fra vikingetiden øges år for år, og i 1995 dukkede en yderst sjælden efterligning af Karl den Stores Dorestad-mønt op under udgravningen af en boplads fra den sene jernalder og tidlige vikingetid vest for Tissø på Sjælland.

Bopladsen dækker et areal på ca. ½ km² inden for et velafgrænset område langs vestsiden af søen (fig. 1). Trafikalt set var placeringen gunstig, og de omgivende vådområder gav god beskyttelse. De første arkæologiske fund fra Tissø fremkom i 1800-årene. Under grusgravning i 1856 nord for Sæby kirke på østsiden af søen blev en stighøjle fundet sammen med knoglerester og efter sigende også et sværd i en aflang stenboks. Beretningen tyder på en ryttergrav fra første halvdel af 10. årh. I slutningen af 1800-årene og begyndelsen af 1900-årene blev vandstanden i søen sænket med i alt ca. 1,5-2 m, og smykker, redskaber og våben dukkede frem af søbunden. De ældste fund er fra 7. årh. e.Kr., men hovedparten er fra vikingetiden og den tidligste middelalder.

I foråret 1977 blev en næsten to kilo tung guldring, en af de største guldskatte i Danmark, pløjet op på en mark umiddelbart vest for Tissø, og afsøgninger af området gav flere fund fra germansk jernalder og vikingetid. Vejregulering ved broen over Halleby Å førte i 1979 til en mindre udgravning, der afslørede skeletterne af to halshuggede mænd gravlagt i begyndelsen af 11. årh. To arabiske mønter fra begyndelsen af 9. årh. blev fundet ved samme lejlighed, og rester af et broforløb blev undersøgt. Endelig fremkom i 1988 en lille sølvskat bestående af to sølvbægre og nogle smykker.

De mange fund har ført til en koncentreret arkæologisk indsats i området kombineret med afsøgning af markerne med metaldetektor. Bopladsens struktur er afdækket, og antallet af oldsager er steget betydeligt. De over 5.000 metalgenstande omfatter bl.a. importerede smykker med forgyldning og indlægning, talrige vægtlodder, brudsølv og små sølvbarrer samt mønter. Kvaliteten er ofte høj, og oldsagerne bekræfter indtrykket af en usædvanlig velstående bebyggelse, der fungerede gennem flere århundreder fra ca. 500 e.Kr. til begyndelsen af 11. årh. (fig. 2).

Den nye sølv mønt fra Tissø lå i et møddingslag fra 9. årh. i en lille lavning på vestsiden af bopladsen, syd for den nuværende Fugledegård. Mønten er ca. 18 mm i diameter og vejer 0,73 g. To sider, den ene med spor af et ophængningshul, er beskadiget. Overfladen er slidt, men præget står tydeligt (fig. 3). Adversen er en efterligning af Karl den Stores ældre sølvdenar fra før ca. 790 e.Kr. Den forvanskede indskrift er kombineret med et kors, en trefork-lignende figur med svungne grene samt en cirkel med indskrevet kors. En række punkter løber under de forvanskede bogstaver i øverste linie.

Reversmotivets er en mandsfigur med en hjelm-lignende hovedprydelse og et bredt tredelt bælte. Ansigt og ben er gengivet fra siden, og figuren ser ud til at være i bevægelse. Begge arme er løftet, og højre hånd griber om et sværd, der holdes lodret. Modsatte hånd er beskadiget. Bitemnene omfatter et hjulkors til højre for skikkelsen og en insektlignende figur samt en korslignende figur til venstre.

Mønten hører til Brita Malmer's kombinationsgruppe 3, og foreløbig kendes ét andet eksemplar i Staatliche Münzsammlung i München uden fundoplysninger (fig. 4). De to mønter er ikke stempelidentiske, men så lig hinanden, at mønten fra München kan supplere de manglende dele på Tissø-mønten.

CAROLVS-siderne afviger lidt fra hinanden. På mønten fra Tissø er det først og fremmest de forvanskede bogstaver AR i øverste linie og V i nederste linie, der bekræfter forlægget for motivet. Det første bogstav i navnet er erstattet af en figur, der minder om en fugl med hovedet nedad. Motivet står tydeligere på mønten fra München og ser ud til at inkorporere det L, der skulle indlede sidste stavelse i CAROLVS. O-et er på begge mønter udformet som en ganske tynd lille cirkel, der på Tissø-mønten har fået tilføjet et kors. Et smalt S på mønten fra München ligger omtrent vandret, mens S-et på Tissø-mønten er erstattet af et kors.

De to mønter kan dateres til begyndelsen af 9. årh. De afviger i detaljerne fra de øvrige efterligninger af Karl den Stores udmøntning, og den gående mand er foreløbig et enkeltstående motiv.

Karolingiske denarer og angelsaksiske sceattas fra 8. årh. er foreslået som forlæg for mandsmotivet, og en gående eller stående mand forekommer desuden på omtrent samtidige efterligninger af solidi udmøntet under Ludvig den Fromme (814-840). Der er dog ingen nøjagtige paralleller, og der er grund til at overveje, om ikke forlæggene for mandsmotivet på de to mønter fra Tissø og München skal søges inden for andre fundgrupper. De mest karakteristiske træk på mønternes revers er:

- En mandsfigur i gående, snarere end stående stilling.
- Et sværd holdt i mandens højre hånd; den trekantede fæsteknap var almindelig i yngre germansk jernalder og tidlig vikingetid.
- To korslagte stave i venstre hånd.
- Et tredelt mavebælte.
- En hjelm eller hovedprydelse med to horn.

Oldsagsmaterialet fra yngre germansk jernalder i Norden viser tydelige paralleller til dette motiv. Samme træk går igen på adskillige smykker, både som detaljer og i hel figur. Allerede blandt Tissø-fundene findes et brudstykke af en smykkenål af bronze, der er udformet som et mandshoved med hornet hjelm (fig. 5). De yderste ender af hornene er knækket af, men figuren svarer nøje til en bronzegenstand fra Staraja Ladoga i Rusland, og her er hovedprydelsen afsluttet i to fuglehoveder (fig. 6). Denne figur stammer fra et fundkompleks dateret til anden halvdel af 8. årh. Figurer med en lidt mindre hovedprydelse er anvendt som dekorativ afslutning på småredskaber, og en blymodel med udviskede fuglefigurer, men til gengæld kraftigt overskæg og to markante runde øjne er fundet på handelspladsen i Ribe i lag fra 8. årh.

Andre paralleller til motivet findes på ornamentale helmblik fra yngre germansk jernalder. Næsten identiske helmblik fra grav 7 og 8 på Valsgårde-gravpladsen i Uppland, Sverige, viser en mandsfigur med en stav eller et spyd i den ene hånd og en hovedprydelse med horn, der er afsluttet med to fuglehoveder (fig. 7). En lignende figur findes på en bronzematrice beregnet til fremstilling af helmblik fra Torslunda på Öland, Sverige (fig. 8).

Helmblikkene viser samme kombination af udstyr som mønterne: en kofteliggende dragt båret sammen med et flerdelt bælte, en hjelm eller hovedprydelse med buede horn, der mødes over mandens isse, og et eller to våben i hver hånd. Selve figurtegningen med benene set fra siden i bevægelse og overkroppen set forfra findes på en hjelm fra Vendel grav XIV, Uppland, samt på en anden matrice fra Torslunda. Krigerne bærer her spyd og sværd, og sværdene holdes lodret i den ene hånd. I stedet for horn har krigernes hjelm en enkelt kam udformet som et dyr eller en fugl.

En hjelm fra Sutton Hoo i Østanglia, England, er nært beslægtet med de svenske hjelme. Der er bevaret fragmenter af to figurer, der bærer samme type fuglehoved-hjelm med langt nakkeparti samt et sværd med trekantet fæsteknap og to krydsede spyd (fig. 9). Et tredelt bælte holder koften sammen. Lignende figurer optræder på småting fra England og kontinentet.

Ud over reliefferne omfatter parallellerne til møntmotivet tre-dimensionelle figurer af helt samme udformning. En kvindegrav fra Birka i Uppland (grav 571) indeholdt et 2,9 cm højt støbt sølvvedhæng udformet som en menneskefigur i lang kofte og med hornet hjelm (fig. 10). I den ene hånd bærer figuren et sværd med trekantet fæsteknap, i den anden en stavlignende genstand. Baseret på det øvrige indhold kan graven dateres til første halvdel af 10. årh. En tilsvarende figur blev i 1968 fundet i en kvindegrav fra tidlig vikingetid på Ekhammer-gravpladsen i Uppland (fig. 11). Den 3 cm høje figur har en hornet hjelm og tredelt bælte. I den ene hånd holder han et sværd med trekantet fæsteknap, i den anden to korte korslagte stave svarende til motivet på mønten fra München.

Blandt mylderet af personer på et billedtæppe fra Oseberggraven afdækket i 1904 i Vestfold, Norge, ses endnu en person med en hornet hovedprydelse. Figuren står med bøjede arme. I den ene hånd ses to genstande, formentlig to korslagte stave, og i den anden et sværd holdt under fæstet. Scenen er ufuldstændig, men der er næppe tvivl om, at samme motiv som på mønterne var hensigten. Fældningsåret for tømmeret til gravkammeret er dendrokronologisk fastlagt til 834 e.Kr., hvilket giver en *terminus ante quem* for tapetet.

Figurerne af bronze og sølv, helmblikkene og processionen på Osebergtapetet tyder alle på, at den gående mand med de karakteristiske attributter var en velkendt figur i Skandinavien i yngre germansk jernalder og vikingetid.

De små mandsfigurer tolkes gerne som guden Odin afbildet med sine to fugle, Hugin og Munin, men figurerens underordnede rolle i flere gengivelser tyder på, at de ikke nødvendigvis repræsenterer en af hovedguderne i den nordiske mytologi. Uanset mandsfigurerens identitet er en religiøs eller mytologisk tilknytning mulig. Hertil kommer, at den væbnede kriger ud fra det overleverede kildemateriale at dømme havde en central ideologisk betydning i århundrederne op til vikingetiden. Set på denne baggrund kan det antages, at mandsmotivet på mønterne er udtryk for et bevidst valg, ikke blot en simpel kopiering eller overtagelse af et fremmed møntbillede. Tolkningen af bitlegnene på mønterne er uvis, og både en symbolsk betydning knyttet til hovedmotivet og en funktion i forbindelse med udmøntningen kan tænkes.

Den gående mandsfigur på mønten fra Tissø kan opfattes som endnu et eksempel på overførsel af et ældre velkendt motiv til den nye udmøntning i 9. årh. Forlægget for en anden gruppe tidlige nordiske mønter, Brita Malmers kombinationsgruppe 5-6, er en sceatta af Wodan-Monster type udmøntet i 8. årh. Oprindelsen til det karakteristiske stirrende mandshoved og det bagudseende dyr på disse mønter kan igen søges i andre genstandsgrupper. For den gående mand er der intet eksakt møntforbillede, selv om ældre og samtidige mønter kan have inspireret møntmesteren, og møntens advars kopierer en velkendt mønt. I stedet synes forlægget hentet direkte i andre håndværk, og hensigten bag valget af det kendte motiv var måske at støtte møntens værdi i et område, hvor brugen af mønter endnu var begrænset.

Det lader sig foreløbig ikke afgøre, hvor Tissø-mønten er slået, men det er tankevækkende, at den er fundet på en velstående boplads ved søen Tissø, krigsguden Tyr's sø.