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ANGLO-SAXON AND FRISIAN SCEATTAS IN THE LIGHT OF
FRISIAN HOARDS AND SITE-FINDS

by
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Introduction

The standard work of reference for Anglo-Saxon coins, Keary's British Museum Catalogue, was published as long ago as 1887, yet little or nothing was done to promote the study of sceattas until the early 1940s., when two valuable papers appeared, one by Paul Le Gentilhomme and the other by Dr. C. H. V. Sutherland¹). These papers first led students to suspect — and subsequent research has amply confirmed that suspicion — that Keary's catalogue included much that was not of English origin. How far the balance has been tilted, rather illogically, in the English favour was immediately apparent when I made a comprehensive study of Frisian hoards and site-finds during my visit to the Netherlands and Westphalia in the spring of this year.

Briefly, the position is this. Many types are exclusively Anglo-Saxon and some are equally exclusively Frisian, yet the commercial intercourse between the two peoples seems to have resulted in their mutually copying each other's types, so that on both sides of the North Sea we find examples of the other's coins, both originals and imitations. Our task will be to see if we can differentiate between these various groups, or at least to attempt to simplify the problem by finding some means of recognizing those types which are indigenous to Frisia.

Before we start our labours, let us remind ourselves of the various series into which sceattas fall typologically. In two previous papers²) I divided Keary's 54 types and the score or so which have since been discovered into four main series, to which must be added a small group of miscellanea: the Standard, London, Animal and Anglo-Merovingian Series. The Standard Series consists of those pieces whose reverses were derived from the standard on one of the two VIRTUS EXERCIT types of Constantine I and his sons. The London Series, of which many examples have been found in the London

area, is so called because three of its types are inscribed with the name of London (LUNDONIA or, more usually, a blundered form of it), from which we suspect them to have been struck there, the remainder being connected by style and type with these three. The Animal Series describes itself: several of its types overlap with the London Series and a few are undoubtedly of Frisian origin. The Anglo-Merovingian Series contains the few types which were copied from Merovingian prototypes.

Little purpose will be served by considering all these types individually and we can therefore omit all those, such as the London Series and many of the Animal Series, of which the English origin is not in doubt. Those which we shall have to consider are BMC types 4 and 5³) (which following Sutherland, we shall call by the more convenient name of „porcupines”: e.g. Pl. I, 7, 1) and their derivative (BMC 6: the „plumed bird” type, Pl. I. 10), those with a cross with a pellet in each angle on either the obverse or reverse (Pl. II, 2, 19-21), type 31 (the „Wodan-monster”, Pl. II, 26), certain radiate busts with runic letters, often blundered, (Pl. II, 22) a similar type with a very crude radiate bust (BMC 2b, Pl. II, 24) and certain coins with animal reverses, the style of which is hardly in the English idiom (e.g. Pl. I, 18; II, 25). We shall consider the evidence of hoards, site-finds, style and types and see how many of the above-mentioned types must be extracted from the Anglo-Saxon series and included among the Frisian productions.

The Hoard Evidence

The Franeker hoard (Pl. I, 1—6) is undoubtedly one of our most important pieces of evidence. It came to light in 1868 and was first published by Dirks two years later in the *Revue belge*⁴). From the completely uncirculated condition of its contents and its numerous die-identities we may reasonably suppose that the coins were produced not long before their burial and at no very great distance from the site. Moreover, they are mostly of the two porcupine types, are in a homogeneous style and struck in good silver on large flans. The style is coarse with thick central spines, often with a pronounced bend, and with large pellets on both obverse and reverse. Similar pieces were also found at Domburg and Duurstede, but in base metal, sometimes of billon but more frequently of bronze. The style and fabric of the Franeker coins are so distinctive that when I came across similar pieces in the Hague Cabinet I immediately suspected them to

be strays from the Franeker hoard: the discovery of numerous die-links with hoard-coins soon confirmed that suspicion.

In 1838 a large hoard of 756 coins, mostly porcupines, was found at Kloster Barte, near Emden (Pl. I, 7-12). It has apparently never been published and is now in the hands of Dr. Peter Berghaus of the Münster Museum. Here again, the numerous die-identities and the fresh condition of the coins lead us to the same conclusions as in the case of Franeker⁵). Once more we find a homogeneous style, different from that at Franeker but distinctive in itself: neat designs with an abundance of decorative effect, all in good silver on flans varying in size between normal and large.

Those of the Barte coins deserve special mention: two are of the plumed bird type (BMC 6: Pl. I, 10, 11) and one is of type 53, which has a porcupine obverse and a stepped cross reserve (Pl. I, 12). The first two are from the same reverse die and, in spite of what could be a very typical Anglo-Saxon metamorphosis from the porcupines, the type seems to have originated in Frisia, not in England. Indeed, no English provenance is so far recorded for this type, which is not uncommon, though rather scarcer than the porcupines. On this evidence, then, we must assign it, provisionally at least, to Frisia. The third piece presents a difficulty. As it is in mint state and as a style of the porcupine obverse is identical with that of the other Barte coins⁶), there is no doubt that it too was struck at or near the place of burial. Yet the question remains: is the type itself Frisian or is this coin a copy of an English type? Hitherto, we have regarded the stepped cross as a peculiarly Anglo-Saxon motif, almost certainly imitated from contemporary cloisonné work, of which numerous examples abound in early English art, but the Barte coin and the fact that all specimens with known provenances come from the Continent cast some doubt upon an English origin, particularly as the porcupine motif of the obverse may be at least predominantly Frisian. However, it is a rare type and the information at our disposal is hardly sufficient to help us form any definite conclusions, so that the question must remain open for the time being, with a preference for a Frisian origin.

The Hallum hoard (Pl. I, 13-18), also important from our point of view, was published by Dirks in 1870, having been discovered four years earlier. Most of the contents were of the porcupine types, one coin of which had a curious „man with crosses" reverse (Pl. I, 16). The other two coins bore a diademed bust with a cross on the obverse, one being of BMC type 3a (Pl. I, 17) and the other, of which the bust

was in a totally different idiom, had a dragon reverse (Pl. I, 18). The „man with crosses” may well be a Frisian copy of a London Series type (say, BMC 41b: Pl. II, 27), which had arrived in the course of trade and which the engraver had copied and muled with the more familiar porcupine instead of the dragon of the English type. Of the other two coins, that of type 3a seems to have been an importation from England: its style is almost certainly Anglo-Saxon and the type has been found on several English sites. The second piece may well be Frisian, though nothing definite can be said about it, as it is at present the only one known.

Since the Hallum coins are not quite as fresh as those from Franeker and Barte, a very short period of circulation may be postulated before burial. Die-identities, therefore, can hardly be expected and are, in fact, non-existent. The importance of the hoard lies in its additional evidence for a Frisian origin for many of the porcupines.

The last hoard to be considered is from Terwispeel (found in 1863 and also published by Dirks), but as all its coins were of the Wodan-monster type (BMC 31: Pl. II, 26), its importance from our point of view is slight, since this type is now generally accepted as Frisian⁷). In connexion with this hoard it should be mentioned that I discovered, on studying the hoard at Leeuwarden, that Dirks' engravings of two of its coins are very badly executed, which led me to think that the Terwispeel pieces were later imitations of the usual Wodan-monster type, disintegrated into a series of lines through constant copying. This is not the case: they are perfectly normal examples, but in extremely poor condition owing to chemical action of the soil in which they had been buried.

The evidence of site-finds

Site-finds fall into much the same pattern as the hoards. The porcupines were well distributed both in England and Frisia, though in considerably larger numbers. In the latter district, their frequency being particularly high at Domburg (Pl. II, 1-11). The cross and pellets types are also very numerous in Frisia, nearly 40 times as numerous as in England. Here again Domburg has the largest quota, which is only to be expected, as it is to the Netherlands for sceattas what Richborough is to England for the Roman series and, to some extent, for sceattas as well. One striking feature of the Domburg coins is that they are mostly of poor quality metal, usually billon or bronze, struck on very thin flans and often in small module (Pl. II, 4, 5), very

different from the contents of the Franeker and Barte hoards and sometimes even from those of the same types which have turned up in England. This in itself may suggest local manufacture, so that we may reasonably postulate that most of the Domburg finds originated in Frisia. Some purely English types in an English idiom were also found, however, and these can only have been importations; on the other hand, those of English types but of unusual style may well be Frisian copies of English coins.

Evidence of style and type

Generally speaking, Anglo-Saxon engravers adopted a careful, neat style, which is easily distinguished from the coarse, but often more virile, workmanship of the continental engravers. Another English characteristic was a large variety of types, many of which exhibited ingenious morphological changes: a prototype would be copied, not slavishly, but duplicated and even quadruplicated, then made to revolve around a central point, until it was completely forgotten in a new and frequently charming type. Many types, too, are found exclusively, or almost exclusively, in England and these must assuredly be of Anglo-Saxon origin.

Our main problem, however, concerns the place of origin of the porcupines — whether they originated on the English or the continental side of the North Sea. Before we can attempt an answer, we must summarize briefly their morphology. As I have shown elsewhere⁸⁾, their ancestor was the „diademed bust with cross” of BMC type 3a (Pl. I, 17; II, 12)⁹⁾ and not, as was formerly believed, the wolf and twins of type 7 (Pl. II, 16). Now, 3a is found in England and Frisia in roughly equal quantities but in style it is more Anglo-Saxon than Frisian, a stylistic sequence from very „Romanized” to very „Saxonized” being traceable. As regards the porcupines themselves, however, although the quantity which has turned up in England is by no means negligible, those from Frisia greatly outnumber them, from which we could make out a fairly conclusive argument for a Frisian origin. Yet how account for the porcupine obverse of such undoubtedly English pieces as the „Aethiliraed” sceattas (Pl. II, 7), which in all probability bear the name of Aethelred of Mercia (675-702)? I suggest that, having been derived in Frisia from English types, the porcupines came over to England in the course of trade¹⁰⁾ and were occasionally muled by Anglo-Saxon moneyers with purely English types — the runic „Aethiliraed”, the very „Romanized” bust of BMC type 9 and

its variant reading *MONITASCORVM* (Pl. II, 17, 18)¹¹) and (more doubtfully English) the „stepped cross” of type 53 (Pl. II, 9).

We have now to consider the cross and pellets design, which Le Gentilhomme has assigned to Frisia¹²). These are: BMC 8 (rev. Standard), 2c and 50 (obv. radiate bust) and a runic (Apa) type, though the last-named is also found with a normal Standard reverse (Pl. II, 19-21, 2). In practice, however, these four types resolve into only two, since a closer study of the coins, particularly those in the Dutch collections, has revealed that 2c and 50 are the same type, being merely blundered versions of the Apa cross and pellets coins. Type 8 has not so far been found in England and Frisian examples of the other type outnumber the English by about 40 to one. The answer seems to be that type 8 is Frisian and that, while Apa itself, like all the runic pieces, originated in England with a normal Standard reverse, it was copied, often successfully and with a correct legend but muled with a native reverse, the cross and pellets.

Passing to the blundered imitations of the runic coins with a Standard reverse (Pl. II, 22), we can state that it is impossible at present to distinguish between those of Anglo-Saxon and those of Frisian manufacture, although a careful study of the respective styles of those with English and Frisian provenances would probably throw some light on the problem. It would be most unfair to assign all these blundered pieces to the Frisians, as their neighbours across the North Sea were equally capable of producing unintelligible copies, as some of the impossible versions *LVNDONIA* in the London Series will show!

The other two types with a radiate bust (BMC 2a and 2b: Pl. II, 23, 24) are almost certainly English, not only because of their provenances but also because of their style, which is sufficiently distinguishable from the Frisian versions of a bust to warrant our assigning them to England. Some of type 2b seem to be degraded copies of 2a, others degraded copies of the runic coins, but both all are probably English, since most of the provenanced specimens come from the eastern countries and East Anglia.

What may represent a purely Frisian style of portraiture is seen on these types, all with the same kind of obverse bust: a glance at the plates will immediately show the difference from the Anglo-Saxon idiom (Pl. I, 18 and, say, Pl. II, 28). Our coin, from Hallum, has a dragon (Pl. I, 18), one a bird (Pl. II, 25) (no provenance, but the bird is paralleled on another type from Domburg: Pl. II, 10) and one, also from Domburg, a „London-style” bust (Pl. II, 11). This

third („double-obverse”) coin is unusual, mingling as it does the Frisian and English portrait-style, but as several London Series coins were found at Domburg, there is every reason to consider this apparently „London-style” bust as an imitation, used in conjunction with a bust of Frisian style.

Conclusions

The result of our researches, then, has been to add a few more types to the one (BMC 31) which has already been transferred to the Frisian series. The porcupines, with a Standard reserve, the cross and pellets types, some of the blundered runic pieces and one or two Animal Series coins. Much more remains to be done to classify this extremely complicated subject but, we may hope, a few pointers are here set out for the guidance of any who may feel the desire to tackle still further an interesting but difficult problem.

Finally, I must express my grateful thanks to the officials of the Koninklijk Penningkabinet, especially to Dr. H. Enno van Gelder and Dr. A. N. Zadoks-Jitta for their kind hospitality and co-operation during my visit, to Dr. A. Wassenbergh of Leeuwarden, Mr. H. Pieters of Middelburg, Dr. H. Brunsting of Leiden and Dr. P. Glazema and Mr. J. G. N. Renaud of Amersfoort for allowing me to study their collections. Also, I must say how grateful I am to Dr. P. Berghaus of Münster for allowing me to study the Barte hoard and to trespass upon his territory by using it in this paper before he himself has been able to publish it officially in detail. Nor must I omit my best thanks to the Keeper of Coins, the British Museum, Mr. H. T. Shrubbs of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Commander R. P. Mack, R. N., Mr. Fred. Baldwin and Mr. F. Elmore Jones for kindly allowing me to illustrate their coins.

1) P. Le Gentilhomme, „La circulation des sceattas”, *Mélanges de numismatique mérovingienne*, Paris 1938, p. 23-49; C. H. V. Sutherland, „Anglo-Saxon Sceattas in England”, *Numismatic Chronicle*, 6th s. 2 (1942), p. 42-70.

For the sceattas found in Frisia see: P. C. J. A. Boeles, *Friesland tot de elfde eeuw*, 's-Gravenhage 1952-3, p. 366-81 (English summary p. 590-2).

2) Ph. V. Hill, „The „Standard” and „London” Series of Anglo-Saxon Sceattas”, *Brit. Num. Journal* 26 (1950-1), p. 251-278; Ph. V. Hill, „The Animal, „Anglo-Mero-vingian”, and Miscellaneous Series of Anglo-Saxon Sceattas”, *Brit. Num. Journal* 27 (1952-3), p. 1-38.

3) One of the many useful conclusions to which I came after studying the Frisian finds was that these types, 4 and 5, are really the same type and that Keary was wrong when he considered type 5 to have been derived from 4. This was proved by reverse die-identities in Frisian hoards.

4) *Revue de la Num. Belge*, 5e s. 2 (1870), p. 276-7.

5) Another indication of a mint in the vicinity is provided by a die-link between certain coins in the hoard and one found further north, at Norden.

6) It remains to be seen, when Dr. Berghaus has completed his final study of the hoard, whether this piece shares an obverse die with other hoard-coins: if so, our argument is made even more conclusive. Unfortunately, my time at Münster was too limited for me to do more than identify a few of the many die-identities which the hoard must have contained.

7) Sutherland (cf. n. 1), p. 60, 66.

8) *B. N. J.*, 1950-1, (cf. n. 2), p. 254-5.

9) The sequence appears to be: B. M. C. types 3a → 3b → 10 → 4 and 5 (Pl. II, 12-15).

10) We must not forget the various emporia run by Frisian merchants in several English towns, including London and York, which must have helped to circulate Frisian coins throughout the English kingdoms.

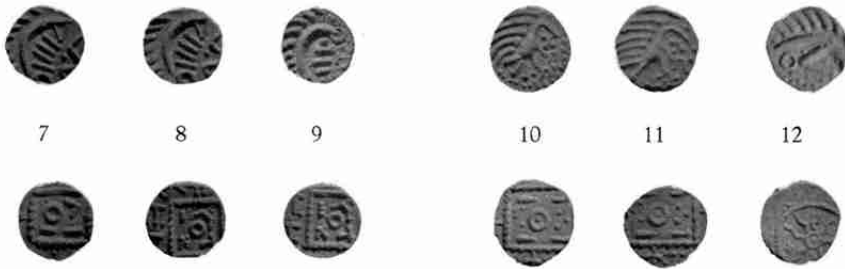
11) One example of this unusual type came from Eastcote (Northants) (Pl. II, 18) and another, on a very small flan, from Domburg (Pl. II, 8).

12) Le Gentilhomme, (cf. n. 1), p. 74-5.



1 2 3 4 5 6

FRANEKER HOARD: one obv.die, three rev.dies



7 8 9 10 11 12

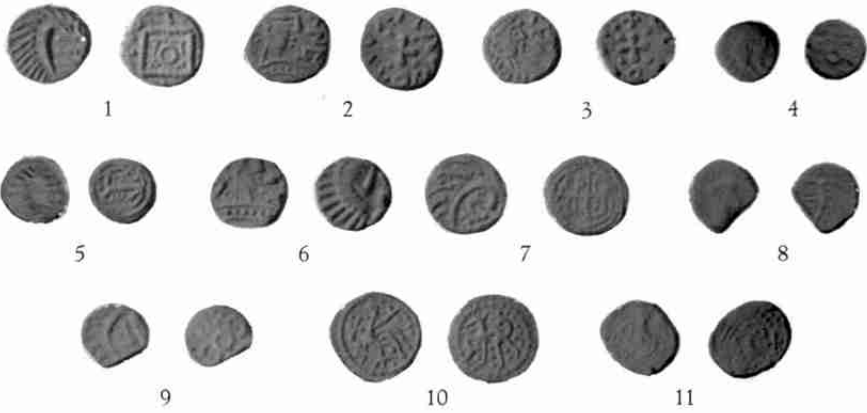
BARTE HOARD: 7 and 8 same obv.die, 8 and 9 same rev.die, 10 and 11 same rev.die;
12 type 53



13 14 15

16 17 18

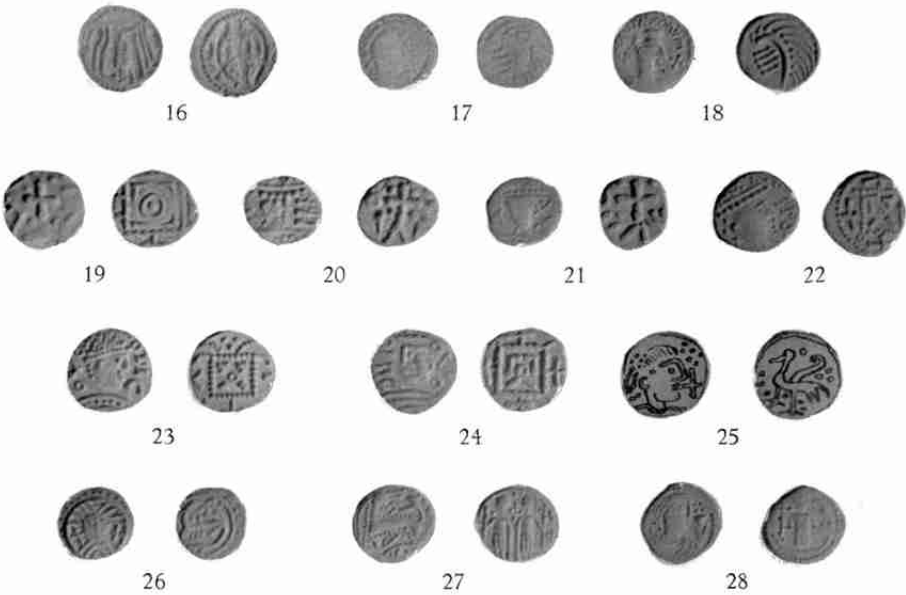
HALLUM HOARD
Anglo-Saxon and Frisian Sceattas



DOMBURG SITE FINDS



DERIVATION OF "PORCLIPINES": 3a (obv.), 3b (obv.), 10 (rev.), 4 and 5 (obv.)



OTHER TYPES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT
Angle-Saxon and Frisian Sceattas