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FOUR CAROLINGIAN COINS FOUND AT WIJK-BIJ-DUURSTEDÉ AND NOW IN THE ROYAL COIN CABINET AT STOCKHOLM

by Michael Dolley and Tamás Sárkány

A recent investigation into material relating to the well-known nineteenth-century archaeological excavations at Birka, the Viking-age emporium on the island of Björkö in Lake Malar to the west of the modern Swedish capital, has had as one unexpected consequence the bringing to light of a group of ninth-century coins with a Dutch provenance which were preserved in the cupboards of the Royal Swedish Coin Cabinet, now a department of the Museum of National Antiquities at Stockholm. The four silver pennies are without inventarium number, and were found folded into a nineteenth-century visiting-card inscribed with the name of *Dr Hjalmar Stolpe* who is further described as of Stockholm and as *Conservator am K. Archeologischen Museum*. Pencilled on the back of the card is the following: *mynt från Wijk by Duurstede, af Cronqvist* (coin(s) from Wijk-bij-Duurstede, through Cronqvist).

Knut Hjalmar Stolpe¹ was born in 1841 at Gävle. At the beginning of his academic career the natural sciences claimed his attention, but he soon devoted his interest to archaeology, in which field he was in more than one respect a pioneer. Hjalmar Stolpe ranks indeed as one of the outstanding personalities within Swedish archaeology. No Swedish archaeologist can claim to have carried out such extensive and important excavations as those with which his name will always be associated. In 1871 he made his first journey to Björkö on Lake Malar where he intended studying the long known occurrence of amber in and around the island - at this stage the project was a purely natural scientific one. In 1872, though, he was able to present the results of the first year's excavations in an academic dissertation. In the following year he was offered the position of Reader (*Docent*) in Northern Archaeology at the University of Lund, an appointment which in the event he never took up. In 1874 he was appointed assistant curator of the collections of the Royal Academy of Literature, History and Antiquities, and during the years 1873-79 and 1881 he investigated some eleven hundred graves on Björkö. A comprehensive publication of this abundant material which he had planned was something never completed within his lifetime, and from his pen there are only some short papers. The principal reason for this was that Stolpe's interest was soon afterwards diverted into ethnography.

In 1880-81 a scholarship afforded him the opportunity of travelling to study the ethnographical collections of the major European museums. The Björkö excavations, however, were not lost sight of and during a stay in Holland he

intended carrying out a systematic excavation on the site of Dorestad, the Frisian emporium broadly contemporary with Birka.

In a letter², dated 15 June 1880, from Leiden and addressed to the Swedish Director General of the Central Office and Museum of National Antiquities (*Riksanantikvarien*) Hans Hildebrand, Stolpe wrote as follows: „Yesterday I couldn't telegraph, because I didn't get back until 11 o'clock in the evening from W. b. Durstede, where I had dug without any luck. . . . Such a scandalous vandalising of a monument so important for the cultural history of the Netherlands as I saw there, I couldn't dream of. . . . You can believe that the excitement was great in this little town! Van Musschenbroek, who once his family had moved to the country, lived only for making everything easy and comfortable for me, had procured a letter from the Minister for Home Affairs to the Mayor and he straightway put himself and all the police at my disposal! The Mayor invited us first to breakfast at his club. The comp. consisted of the host, a young very nice fellow, van M. who originally was not to have come with us to D.stede, but finally couldn't bear to be separated fr. us, and who had reached us in Utrecht the day before, Emmy and I, and a real character from Durestede, a stone-deaf eccentric with the most ridiculous whining voice, the archaeological pundit of the town. *He had his pocket full of Frankish coins, and he gave me some of them.*”³

It was not until the year 1900 that Stolpe became the head of the ethnographical department of the Natural History Museum (*Riksmuseum*), and only in 1903 was he made professor. He died on 27 January 1905.

In the days when Stolpe was visiting Duurstede the science of Carolingian numismatics was still in its infancy, and for men of that generation the coins would have seemed quite remarkably similar to those which Stolpe's own excavations at Birka had been bringing to light, though in fact it is not difficult to show that the four coins are somewhat earlier in point of date of striking than the majority of those to which a Birka provenance attaches.⁴

The reference to Cronqvist should perhaps be elucidated at this juncture. Albert Werner Cronqvist⁵ (1846–1910), a chemist, was a slightly younger contemporary of Stolpe's, and is known to have made a number of chemical analyses for the Museum. It is not without significance that the fourth of the coins here published has had drilled through it in modern times – to judge from the neatness and characteristic burr – a perfectly circular hole with a diameter of exactly 2 mm. It is the type of sample that would be taken by a metallurgist, and it is reasonable to suppose that Stolpe had sought Cronqvist's opinion. Mutilation of a coin casually acquired in the course of travel abroad – and Cronqvist too is known to have journeyed in Europe – would not have been reprehensible in the name of science, though of course it would have been

unthinkable in the case of a coin possessing the rightly sacrosanct Birka provenance. Here is another argument that the four coins do not derive from Stolpe's own excavation, and needless to say they do not figure in any printed listing of the Birka material⁶.

A description of the four coins (Pl. I) is as follows:

1 Charlemagne

Second coinage: Lucca

Obv. ///RLVS///// Cross

Rev. ///CA Carolus monogram

Fragment. Die-axis 0°. Wt. 0.96 g. Diameter 19 mm.

Morrison-Grunthal⁷ 223 (*cf.* Gariel⁸ XII, 177).

No coin of the mint is recorded by Völkers⁹ in his meticulous review of 203 single-finds from Wijk-bij-Duurstede, but Italian coins of Charlemagne do figure (Milan 2, Pavia 3, Treviso 7 and Ravenna (?) 4), and the addition of Lucca would not surprise. It is perhaps worth remarking that it is doubtful if a fragment of this order would have been taken seriously in the nineteenth century unless by a Gariel, and certainly in the company of a plethora of whole coins it would have been completely overshadowed.

2 Louis the Pious

Imperial coinage: Pavia

Obv. +HLVDOV//VSIMP Cross

Rev. //APIA in one line across the field

Two fragments. Die-axis 210°. Wt. 1.14 g. Diameter 21,3 mm.

Morrison-Grunthal 447 (*cf.* Gariel, XVII, 95).

The Veuillin and Belvézet hoard-provenances noted by Morrison would put this coin fairly early in the reign. Völkers records a comparable piece as occurring in the Wijk-bij-Duurstede excavations which have also thrown up coins of the reign from other Italian mints (Treviso 1, Venice 2).

3 Louis the Pious

Christiana Religio-issue, without mint-signature.

Obv. +HLVDOVVICVSIMP Cross with pellet in each angle.

Rev. +XPISTIANA RELIGIO Tetrastyle temple with a cross between the two pairs of pillars: to the left of temple a small cross *pattée*, the right arm not struck up.

It is interesting to itemize the provenances recorded by Morrison for varieties with one or more additional crosses in the reverse field: Morrison-Grunthal 474: Pilligerheck, La Chaussée; Morrison-Grunthal 475: Pilligerheck; Morri-

son-Grunthal 476: Pilligerheck, Wijk-bij-Duurstede, Mullaghboden; Morrison-Grunthal 477: Pilligerheck, La Chaussée. If the mark is significant, it might be thought to suggest a mint lying in the general area of the mouth of the Rhine, and certainly one north of the Seine and west of the Elbe.

Die-axis 0°. Wt. 1.52 g. Diameter: 19 mm.

Morrison-Grunthal 475 var.

The weight, workmanship and the presumed provenance alike suggest a coin actually of Louis the Pious and not one of the posthumous issues with *types immobilisés*.

4 Louis the Pious

Christiana Religio-issue, without mint-signature.

Obv. +HIVDOVVICVSIIIID

Cross with pellet in each angle.

Rev. +XPISTIAOA PIIICIO

Tetrastyle temple with a cross between the two pairs of pillars: beneath the temple an annulet.

The initial aspirate of the imperial name takes the form of a runic 'M'. It is instructive to note that the only two hoard-provenances cited by Morrison for coins of this reign and class with an annulet in the reverse field are: Morrison-Grunthal 480: Pilligerheck; Morrison-Grunthal 490: Roswinkel. In combination with the occurrence of the rune these could suggest that once again we are confronted with a coin emanating from a mint situated in the extreme north-western corner of Europe.

Die-axis 90°. Wt. 1.44 g. (after modern piercing). Diameter 21 mm.

Morrison-Grunthal 480 var.

The blundering of the reverse legend could suggest a relatively late date, but the weight and the apparently good quality of the metal argue – with the presumed provenance – for the coin being broadly contemporaneous with the last, and we would prefer to attribute the deficiencies of technique to the incompetence of a provincial engraver.

To sum up. What this note has sought to do is to put on record four coins in the Royal Coin Cabinet at Stockholm to which there attaches a Wijk-bij-Duurstede provenance, but which seem not to have been previously remarked in the literature. The case for their deriving from the excavations at this great Carolingian emporium seems unanswerable, and it may seem not unuseful to be able to add Lucca to the not overlong catalogue of mints of Charlemagne represented in the finds from Dorestad. At the same time we may perhaps express the hope that the publication of two minor but provenanced variants in the too long amorphous *Christiana Religio* series may contribute one more crumb to the ultimate elucidation of the pattern of its striking.

- ¹ *Svenska män och kvinnor. Biografisk uppslagsbok* 7 (Stockholm, 1954), pp. 249-250.
Cf. Holger Arbman, Hjalmar Stolpe som fornforskare, *Fornvännen* 1941, pp. 146-162.
- ² ATA (= *Antiquar-Topographic-Archiv* – the antiquarian and topographical archives of the Royal Academy of Literature, History and Antiquities) Hans Hildebrand's correspondence, Tome 17. Cf. Arbman, *Op. cit.*, p. 155.
- ³ We are grateful to Dr. H. Enno van Gelder of the Koninklijk Kabinet van Munten, Penningen en Gesneden Stenen at The Hague for the observation that the reference is almost certainly to the Dutch amateur archaeologist J. F. Croockewit (1833-1898) who fits the description and who was actually working at Wijk bij Duurstede at the relevant time, cf. A. Roes, Vondsten van Dorestad, *Archaeologica Traiectina*, VII (1965), pp. 3-5, and especially pp. 74-76 where most of the Swedish text of the letter is quoted.
- ⁴ Nils Ludvig Rasmusson, Kring de västerländska mynten i Birka, *Från Stenålder till Rokoko. Studier tillägnade Otto Rydbeck* (Lund, 1937), pp. 113-135.
- ⁵ *Svenskt Biografiskt Lexikon* IX (Stockholm, 1931), pp. 236-243.
- ⁶ Gustaf Hallström, *Birka I. Hjalmar Stolpes grafundersökningar* (Stockholm, 1913)
Holger Arbman, *Birka I* (Uppsala 1940-1943).
- ⁷ Karl F. Morrison and Henry Grunthal, *Carolingian Coinage. Numismatic Notes and Monographs No. 158* (New York, 1967).
- ⁸ E. Gariel, *Les Monnaies Royales de France*, Vols. I-II (Strasbourg, 1883-1884).
- ⁹ Hans Herman Völkers, *Karolingische Münzfunde der Frühzeit (751-800). Abhandlung der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge*, Nr. 61 (Göttingen, 1965).

SAMENVATTING

De auteurs publiceren vier Karolingische munten, die zij aantreffen in Kungliga Myntkabinettet te Stockholm. Blijkens bijbehorende notities werden de munten in 1880 door de Zweedse archeoloog Dr. K. H. Stolpe tijdens een studiereis in Nederland ten geschenke ontvangen van een plaatselijk oudheidkundige, vermoedelijk J. F. Croockewit.



1



2



3



4

Four Carolingian coins found at Wijk-bij-Duurstede