

Vestfold: A Monetary Perspective on the Viking Age*

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Vestfold is particularly rich in Viking Age heritage. Striking examples are the Gokstad and Oseberg grave mounds with the famous ships that are on display in Oslo today; the Borre burial complex, within the vicinity of the Viken area (Oslofjord area); the Hon-treasure, the largest Viking Age gold hoard; and the *Skiringssalskaupang*, Norway's oldest town-like settlement established c.800.¹ During the last couple of years another significant site has emerged in Vestfold, making the region even more outstanding in the context of the Viking Age.² The number of Viking-Age hoards, grave finds with equipment for metal production, imported beads and amber and weights provide evidence for Vestfold being a centre of exchange.³ And, from a monetary perspective, the largest coin hoard from ninth- and tenth-century Norway was found in the area between the Gokstad and Oseberg ship burials, at Grimstad in Stokke.⁴

In recent years coin finds from Vestfold have increased radically, and thus provide a laboratory for further studies of the use of coins and money in the Viking Age. While coin finds from ninth- and tenth-century Norway in general are rather modest compared to their equivalents from Denmark and Sweden, and especially Gotland, Öland and Bornholm, the stray finds from Vestfold have

* I am grateful to Professor Jan Bill for his generosity in making the coin material from Heimdalsjordet available for discussion at an early stage and to Houshang Khazaei for his attributions of the dirham material found in Norway.

¹ Vestfold is also famous for Stone Age settlements sites like Auve in Sandefjord, see for example E. Østmo, *Auve. En fangstboplass fra yngre steinalder på Vesterøya i Sandefjord. I. Den arkeologiske del*, Norske Oldfunn, 28 (Oslo, 2008).

² For a general survey of coin finds from Viking and medieval Vestfold, see K. Skaare, *Coins and Coinage in Viking-Age Norway* (Oslo, 1976); K. Skaare, 'Utmyntningen i det gamle Tunsberg', *Vestfold-minne* 1971, 86–102.

³ Frans-Arne Stylegard, Kaupangs omland og urbaniseringstendenser i norsk vikingtid, in J. Brendalmo, F.-E. Eliassen and T. Gansum (eds), *Den urbane underskog. Strandsteder, utvekslingssteder og småbyer i vikingtid, middelalder og tidlig nytid* (Oslo, 2009), 81–9.

⁴ Skaare, *Coins and Coinage*, 138 (no. 43).

during the last decade become more prolific than most other regions in Viking Scandinavia.

The first new stray finds of coins from Vestfold were associated with the Kaupang project.⁵ By utilising new methods and asking different questions, a large-scale project was initiated on the site where Norway's first town was situated, at Kaupang in Vestfold, a site mentioned in the geographical account of Othhere, written down in an expanded Old English translation of Orosius' *Historia adversus paganos* at the court of Alfred the Great in the late ninth century. The Kaupang project has produced three large volumes interpreting the results from archaeological excavations and metal-detector searches in the settlement area during the years from 2003 to 2005. The number of stray coins from the ninth and tenth century surpasses all previous site finds in the Norwegian context. As a consequence coins and money became important features in the second volume, entitled *The Means of Exchange*. Mark Blackburn was responsible for the numismatic material in this volume and also delivered important contributions to the discussions of the project through his participation in workshops, seminars and conferences. He placed the coin finds from Kaupang into their local, national and Scandinavian contexts, and combined meticulous numismatic research with innovative ideas and interpretations.⁶ Mark's approach to interpretation and dating of the deposition dates for the stray finds of coins has provided a very interesting insight into the import of coins to Kaupang, where Western coinage seems to have dominated before c.840/50, when the Islamic dirhams started to take over. Comparisons made by Mark between coin finds from sites of similar nature in Scandinavia and northern Europe, clearly show that the number of coins lost at Kaupang was significant, and that this is presumably best interpreted as a reflection of coins and silver being used quite extensively.⁷

⁵ For a general survey of the economy of Kaupang, see D. Skre, 'Post-substantivist towns and trade AD 600–1000', in *The Means of Exchange: Dealing with Silver in the Viking Age*, ed. D. Skre, Kaupang Excavation Project Publication Series, 2, Norske Oldfunn, 23 (Aarhus, 2008), 327–41; D. Skre, 'Dealing with silver: economic agency in south-western Scandinavia AD 600–1000', in *Means of Exchange*, ed. Skre, 343–55.

⁶ M. Blackburn, 'The coin-finds', in *Means of Exchange*, ed. Skre, 29–74. This is also acknowledged in a review of the volume by S. Sindbæk in *Fornvännen*, 106 (2011), 261–2; see also M. Blackburn, 'Coin finds from Kaupang: a Viking emporium on the North Sea', in *XIII Congreso Internacional de Numismática, Madrid 2003: Actas*, ed. C. Alfaro, C. Marcos and P. Otero (2 vols, Milan, 2005), 1, 1143–9.

⁷ Blackburn, 'Coin-finds', 73. A few years previously, Blackburn made valuable contributions to another Norwegian research group working on reinterpretations of the largest gold hoard from the Viking Age, the Hon hoard in new contexts. For an extensive discussion of the Hon-hoard, see S.H. Fuglesang and D. Wilson (eds), *The Hon Hoard. A Viking Gold Treasure of the Ninth Century*, Norske Oldfunn, 20 (Oslo, 2006). During his participation with the Hon-

East and West in Coin Finds from Ninth-Century Kaupang

In this chapter I will build on Mark's contributions and introduce new evidence to the discussion of money and its use in Vestfold and the Viken area in the ninth and tenth century. The Viken area comprises the coastland of the Oslofjord and its surrounding hinterland. In medieval literature the area is referred to as Viken, and is often believed to be the etymological origin for the term *Viking* as it appears in contemporary Carolingian and Anglo-Saxon sources.⁸ The western side of the Viken has an etymological reference related to the old Norse *fold* which means 'plain' and *Vest* refers to the west side of the fjord, and the two words put together in Vestfold became the term for the broad open landscape along Viken's western edge. The people living there are mentioned in ninth-century Frankish sources as *Westfaldinga*. The men from 'Westfold' are reported to have been raiding Frankish territory in the year 842: the *Westfaldingi*, according to Frankish sources, set sail up the Seine with 67 ships. Afterwards they set up a winter-camp on the island Noirmoutier in the estuary of the Loire. The island was already at that time an established centre of trade where large quantities of salt and wine passed from south to north. In contemporary Frankish sources the activity of the *Westfaldingi* was portrayed as an example of violent ravaging.⁹ Numismatic evidence of four Carolingian deniers and a gold *tremissis* link Vestfold with the Frankish realm: the *tremissis* from Dorestadt and three of the deniers were found at Kaupang; and the fourth denier was discovered during the investigations of the Heimdalsjordet in Sandefjord, in the vicinity of the Gokstad ship-burial. In addition three Carolingian deniers have been found in the Viken area since 1999.¹⁰ These seven deniers, all of the well-known *Christiana religio* type struck c.822/3–840 in the name of Louis the Pious (814–840), fit

project Blackburn's interest in gold as a feature in Viking society developed, and one of the lasting impacts of this fascination was his study of gold coins in Anglo-Saxon England: M. Blackburn, 'Gold in England during the age of silver (eighth–eleventh centuries)', in *The Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, ed. J. Graham-Campbell and G. Williams (Walnut Creek, CA, 2007), 55–98.

⁸ For exploration of this point see F. Askeberg, *Norden och kontinenten i gammal tid. Studier i fornermansk kulturhistoria* (Uppsala, 1942), 114–83; S. Hellberg, 'Vikingatidens vikingar', *Arkiv för nordisk filologi*, 95 (1980), 25–88; C.E. Fell, 'Old English *wicing*: a question of semantics', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 72 (1986), 295–316; C.E. Fell, 'Modern English "Viking"', *Leeds Studies in English*, 18 (1987), 111–23.

⁹ *Annales Engolismenses* s.a. 843: MGH, SS XVI, ed. G.H. Pertz (Hannover, 1859), 486; G. Jones, *A History of the Vikings* (Oxford, 1968), 210. For a discussion of how these Viking attacks had consequences for Carolingian minting, see S. Coupland, 'The coinages of Pippin I and II of Aquitaine', *RN, 6th series*, 31 (1989), 194–222; S. Coupland, 'The Frankish tribute payments to the Vikings and their consequences', *Francia* 26, 1 (1999), 57–75.

¹⁰ UMK find nos. 2100 (1999), 2165 (2003) and 2265 (2012).

in remarkably well with the records of the *Westfaldingi* and other Viking raiding towns like Dorestad and Paris in the 830s and 840s.¹¹

The fact that only two of seven deniers from Viken were perforated (and hence had been transformed into jewellery), suggests that the remainder had not been in circulation for a long period within the northern lands before they ended up in Vestfold. Studies of Carolingian coins of the *Christiana religio* type provides evidence for these coins often being transformed into jewellery, and thus removed from the monetary scene as such.¹² Interestingly, the Carolingian coins from Kaupang are without traces of secondary functions and must presumably have been used as money. Comparison between the stray finds of Carolingian deniers from Kaupang and stray finds from different sites in the Viken area suggests that the Carolingian deniers were more common in the hinterland of Kaupang. While the *Christiana religio* deniers represent 3 out of 107 coins from Kaupang in the period c.800–950, they account for 3 of 14 coins outside known market contexts elsewhere in Viken. The comparison is based on a small number of finds, and should be considered with caution, but reveal close links between Vestfold and Carolingian society, in the same way as finds from modern Denmark.

Yet, considering the extensive evidence for contacts between Carolingian Francia and Anglo-Saxon England and Scandinavia, the relevant coin finds are remarkably few: in total 107 Frankish deniers from the period 754–840 and 15 Anglo-Saxon pennies from the period c.750–875.¹³ Records of substantial tribute payments to Vikings and extensive Viking raiding activity in both the Frankish realm and on the British Isles are described in contemporary sources, and suggest large riches becoming Viking property. In addition archaeological sources provide material evidence for trade and other direct and indirect contact in the same period.¹⁴

The overall lack of Western European coins in Scandinavian ninth and tenth century contexts is therefore remarkable and surprising. Coins and silver were not strange objects in the Viking world. On the contrary, more than 170,000

¹¹ For a survey of Viking references in Frankish sources, see E. Albrechtsen, *Vikingerne i Franken: skriftlig kilder fra det 9. århundrede* (Odense, 1981).

¹² J.C. Moesgaard, 'Christiana Religio', *Skalk*, 6 (2004), 12–17.

¹³ I.H. Garipzanov, 'Carolingian coins in ninth-century Scandinavia: a Norwegian perspective', *Viking and Medieval Scandinavia*, 1 (2005), 43–71, at 68 (table 1); E. Screen, 'The Norwegian coin finds of the early Viking Age', *Nordisk Numismatisk Årsskrift 2003–5* (2009), 93–121, at 94–5; M. Blackburn and K. Jonsson, 'The Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman element of north European coin finds', in *Viking-Age Coinage in the Northern Lands. The sixth Oxford symposium on Coinage and Monetary History*, ed. M. Blackburn and M. Metcalf, BAR International Series, 122 (2 vols, Oxford, 1981), 1, 147–255, at 150, table 2.

¹⁴ For a survey of archaeological evidence for contact between the British Isles and Vestfold in the Viking Age, see H. Aannestad, *Import, identitet og materiell kultur i vikingtid* (forthcoming).

Islamic silver dirhams from the ninth and tenth centuries have been found within Scandinavia. Subsequently Anglo-Saxon pennies and German Pfennige from the Ottonian and Salian dynasties have been found in even greater numbers in hoards from the period c.950–1100.

In his studies of the coin imports to Kaupang in particular and Scandinavia in general,¹⁵ Mark Blackburn pointed out that the western European coins dominated the imports to Scandinavia in the beginning of the ninth century, albeit still in small numbers.¹⁶ His argument indicated – rather surprisingly, but convincingly – that Western coins dominated the scene at Kaupang in its very first phase, from c.820 to 840/50, before Islamic coins seem to have been present in any great quantity.¹⁷ In the past Islamic dirhams have been viewed as the first Viking currency to have penetrated Scandinavia. Instead, it seems the Islamic silver arrived in Scandinavia within the period c.840 to c.940; that is, within a single century. In longer-term perspective, Roman coins had previously appeared in Norwegian finds from the Roman Iron Age, but the use of western currency in Norway in the first half of the ninth century represents the beginning of the continuous use of coined money in Norway that eventually developed into a money economy.

The first arrivals of Islamic dirhams coincide with the introduction of the hack-silver economy in Norway. Hack-silver became part of the monetary scene at Kaupang sometime in the period c.840–860.¹⁸ The arrival of hack-silver is, of course, also reflected in the adoption of precious metal standard weights of universal acceptability. This must be considered a major step in the history of the

¹⁵ When Kaupang was excavated from 1956 to 1974 the excavations produced 27 coins and fragments of coins: 1 late Roman bronze, 2 Carolingian deniers, 2 Anglo-Saxon pennies, 1 Danish penny and 21 Islamic dirhams. At that point these constituted an unprecedented number of stray finds of Viking coins from a Norwegian site. Archaeological excavations and surveys from 1998 to 2003 produced an additional 76 coins, bringing the total to 103 coins: 1 Late-Roman bronze coin; 2 Byzantine bronze coins of the eighth/ninth and ninth/tenth centuries respectively; 1 Merovingian gold *tremissis*; 1 Carolingian denier; and 71 Islamic dirhams. In addition a crucible melt in the form of a partially molten cake was found which contained another 12 identifiable Islamic coins and at least two pieces of hack-silver (Skaare, *Coins and Coinage*, 139, no. 48; Blackburn, 'Coin-finds', 30; M. Blackburn, K. Jonsson and G. Rispling, 'Catalogue of the coins', in *Means of Exchange*, ed. Skre, 75–93).

¹⁶ Blackburn, 'Coin finds', 57, 70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 70. These findings have been discussed and some reservations expressed due to the limited number of coins used as the basis for the conclusion in a review of this volume by Søren Sindbæk (see above, n. 6).

¹⁸ B. Hårdh, 'Hacksilver and ingots', in *Means of Exchange*, ed. Skre, 95–118, at 118; U. Pedersen, 'Weights and balances', in *Means of Exchange*, ed. Skre, 119–78, at 162; C. Kilger, 'Kaupang from afar: aspects of the interpretation of dirham finds in northern and eastern Europe between the late 8th and early 10th centuries', in *Means of Exchange*, ed. Skre, 199–252, at 228–35; Skre, 'Dealing with silver', 347–49.

Viking-Age economy, and it most certainly took effect at Kaupang in Skiringssal before anywhere else in Norway. However, a second site in the Vestfold region now shows that Kaupang's close involvement with the emerging monetary economy was not an isolated phenomenon. The finds from Kaupang provide a 'profile' of coin finds from the ninth century that can in future be tested against finds of similar volume and context from just some 15 kilometres further north along the Oslofjord coastline.

Heimdalsjordet and the Context of Kaupang

A town-like settlement has recently been discovered close to the Gokstad burial mound where the famous Viking ship was excavated by Nicolaysen in 1880.¹⁹ The site is called the Heimdalsjordet after the local place-name. This new excavation is part of the project 'Gokstad Revitalized' headed by Professor Jan Bill at the Museum of Cultural History in Oslo.²⁰ For some years archaeologists have made geophysical surveys of the landscape surrounding Gokstad, and in 2012 they were able to detect traces of a settlement around 500 metres south of the burial mound, alongside the Viking-Age waterfront. At least 15 smaller houses have been detected on each side of a street. Nearby is an area with several small burial mounds. According to the preliminary reports from the first season of excavations, this seems to have been a settlement which supported production activities.

One of the most interesting questions concerning the new site will, of course, be whether it was a permanent or seasonal settlement. Whatever the conclusion, the number of coins and weights suggests a place where trade and production of precious metal was an important feature of the inhabitants' lives. Through a systematic archaeological approach and extensive use of metal detectors, the total number of coin finds now stands at 183, all but one of them Islamic dirhams. This is the largest number of stray coin finds from any Norwegian Viking site: it surpasses Kaupang in the number of coins found. The dirhams from the new site are very fragmented, which is a common feature of dirhams from similar sites all over Scandinavia. The preliminary work that has been carried out attributes a large share of the dirhams to the Abbasid and Samanid dynasties; the latest coin dates to c.905. The coins are undergoing conservation, and more detailed attributions and dating will be made available in future publications. The only non-Islamic coin identified so far is a Carolingian denier of the *Christiano religio*

¹⁹ N. Nicolaysen, *Langskibet fra Gokstad ved Sandefjord* (Christiania, 1882).

²⁰ The project is presented online at <<http://www.khm.uio.no/english/research/projects/gokstad/index.html>>. Finds from this site have recently been discussed by U. Pedersen and C.L. Rødsrud, 'Nye vektlodd fra Vestfold', *Nicolai*, 119 (2013), 53–9.

type, struck c.822–840. The number of weights from Heimdalsjordet is 147, compared to 420 weights from Kaupang. Vestfold now contains the two sites with most finds of Viking-Age weights anywhere in Scandinavia, in the same way as for single-finds of coins.

The link between this settlement and the grave burial at Gokstad is, of course, of pivotal interest given the closeness of the two sites. In spite of the remarkable nature of the Viking ship burials from Gokstad and Oseberg, not a single artefact of precious metal was found in either of them. The reason is simply that both were targeted by grave robbers. The break-in at Oseberg took place in between 953 and 990, according to dendrochronological dating of wooden spades that the robbers left behind.²¹ The date for the robbery of the Gokstad burial assembly is more difficult to establish with precision, but has been dated to between 939 and 1050, again on the basis of dendrochronologically dated wooden spades.²² In both cases the burial chambers were plundered, and this is most likely the answer to the lack of precious metal items among the finds. The closest one can get to a coin find at Gokstad or Oseberg is a note in the find registry at the Coin Cabinet in Oslo that refers to a find reportedly made in or around the Gokstad burial mound before 1878. The coin is a Roman orichalcum *sestertius* struck in the reign of Claudius (AD 41–54). The coin is undoubtedly genuine, and has been interpreted as an amulet. However, there is no conclusive evidence that can place it with certainty within the Gokstad mound.²³

The missing link between the ship burial at Gokstad and monetary history has now seemingly been found. Since the coins from the Heimdalsjordet provide solid evidence for the settlement being active when the burial was made c.900, further connections between trade, values and the use of money in the area associated with this and similar burials can be discussed. Indeed, recently a Byzantine *miliaresion* in the name of Emperor John I (969–76) was found by a metal detectorist at the farm Basberg Nordre in Tønsberg, approximately 800 metres south-east of the Oseberg burial mound.²⁴ This provides suggestive evidence for coins being in circulation in the immediate vicinity of the Oseberg burial as well.

Another site in the region which may be compared with Heimdalsjordet and Kaupang is Manvik in Brunlanes, in the south of Vestfold, some 20 kilometres south of Kaupang along the coast. Manvik was a manor first mentioned in 1184 when its owner, the *lendmann* Lodin of Manvik was slain in the battle

²¹ J. Bill and A. Daly, 'The plundering of the ship graves from Oseberg and Gokstad: an example of power politics?', *Antiquity*, 86 (2012), 808–24.

²² Ibid.

²³ S.H. Gullbekk, 'Keiser Claudius i Gokstadhaugen', *Viking*, 2009, 169–73.

²⁴ The farm Basberg Nordre (farm registration no. 90/10) in Tønsberg (UMK find no. 2275).

of Fimreite.²⁵ The area around the medieval church (Berg church was built in the first half of the twelfth century) has produced several stray finds in recent years: two Abbasid dirhams issued by Harun al Rashid in AD 796/7 and AD 806/7 and an Anglo-Saxon penny issued by Edward the Confessor *c.*1050.²⁶ Two English sterlings from the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century have been found in the same area.²⁷ Within Berg church itself (a medieval stone church dating from *c.*1100) some 203 stray finds of coins from the period *c.*1170 to *c.*1320 have been found as a result of archaeological excavations under the floors.²⁸ Taken as a whole, these stray finds provide strong evidence for use of money in relation to the church in particular, but also for permanent or seasonal market activity from the Viking Age to the late Middle Age, and presumably also into the early modern period.

Table 14.1 The recent excavation finds and stray finds from Viken, Norway.

Heimsdalsjordet

Carolingian, <i>Christiana religio</i> denier	1	Publication forthcoming
Islamic dirhams (latest coin: <i>c.</i> 905)	182	(see n. 21)

Huseby Vestre site, Rygge kommune, Østfold

Islamic dirhams (latest coin: 813/14)	7	UMK Find no. 2187
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Metal-detector finds

Carolingian, <i>Christiana religio</i> deniers	3	UMK Find nos. 2100, 2165 and 2265
Islamic dirhams (latest coin: 860/61)	7	UMK Find nos. 2114, 2146, 2192, 2193, 2197, 2199, 2206
Byzantium, John Tzimiscēs (976–96), <i>miliaresion</i>	1	UMK Find no. 2275
Anglo-Saxon, Edward the Confessor <i>Expanding Cross</i> penny	1	UMK Find no. 2235

Note. For a summary of the Kaupang coin finds, see n. 15.

²⁵ *Store Norske Leksikon*: Manvik (<http://snl.no/Manvik>).

²⁶ The dirhams: UMK find nos. 2114 and 2206; E. Screen, *SCBI 65: Norwegian Collections. Part I: Anglo-Saxon Coins to 1016* (Oxford, 2013), no. 76.

²⁷ UMK find nos. 2273 and 2292.

²⁸ Archaeological excavations in 1962, 1964 and 1968: see K. Skaare, 'Norske funn av svenske mynter preget for 1319. Festskrift i anledning Brita Malmers 60-års dag', *Hikuin*, 11 (1985), 237–48, (no. 9); Oslo, Coin Cabinet, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo (UMK) find archive.

In sum, nearly 300 stray finds of Viking-Age coins have now been recorded from Vestfold (Table 14.1). A major part of these come from the sites of Kaupang (107) and Heimdalsjordet (183) and other places (7). A survey of the stray finds of coins from the Viken area provides evidence for silver dirhams and some Anglo-Saxon and Carolingian coins being used not only in Vestfold, but presumably also all around Viken. It is difficult to estimate the scale and pattern of inflows of silver from abroad, but at Kaupang and Heimdalsjordet they apparently remained available for a sustained period, and had the potential to support both daily transactions and the development of trade institutions and standards that became important beyond these places in Viking society more widely.

This question of how people used silver and money in the dirham period is an intriguing one. The concept of hack-silver was long ago demonstrated by Professor Birgitta Hårdh.²⁹ It seems clear that a so-called 'hack-silver' economy was prevalent at Kaupang from the mid-ninth century onwards, and if anything the degree of fragmentation seems to be even more significant at Heimdalsjordet than at the Kaupang site. The evidence from Kaupang suggests that fragmentation of coins was the rule rather than the exception among stray finds. Fragmentation seems to have been a common feature at many places in Viking Norway. It is reflected in hoards as far apart as Teisen in Oslo and Rønnevik in the north of Norway (*tpq* 932 and 949 respectively). Both contain a high proportion of dirham fragments, 71 and 97 per cent of the coins respectively.³⁰ These two hoards, from the 930s and 940s, confirm the hack-silver-economy prevailed not only in the Abbasid period in the ninth century, but also during the Samanid period in the tenth century. They (and others like them) also illustrate that hack-silver was used all over Norway, not only at the marketplace in Kaupang. The finds from Vestfold have in recent years been complemented with finds from other parts of the Viken area, in the vicinity of Vestfold. While the west side of the fjord is rich in spectacular Viking heritage, the Viking-Age finds from the east side are, however, less remarkable. This is true for coins and hoards, and, indeed, also for the saga references. But finds are not completely lacking. Excavations in 2007–8 resulted in finds of seven dirhams from the site Huseby Vestre, in Rygge in Østfold together with three fragments of silver artefacts, a fragment of a copper key, a glass bead, lead weights, a lead ingot, lead waste from metal production and the remains of a house structure, all scattered within a

²⁹ B. Hårdh, *Wikingzeitliche Depotfunde aus Südschweden: Katalog und Tafeln*, Acta Archaeologica Lundensia, Series in 4o, 9 (Lund, 1976); Hårdh, 'Hacksilver and ingots'.

³⁰ Skaare, *Coins and Coinage*, nos. 130 and 173. The Islamic dirhams found in towns and productive sites in the Viking world are often heavily fragmented, as for example at Hedeby, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany: V. Hilberg, 'Silver economies of the ninth and tenth centuries AD in Hedeby', in *Silver Economies, Monetisation and Society in Scandinavia, AD 800–1100*, ed. J. Graham-Campbell, S.M. Sindbæk and G. Williams (Aarhus, 2011), 203–25, at 219–20.

single field.³¹ The dirhams, the hack-silver and the weights provide evidence that trade was conducted at this site in the ninth century with dirhams being used as money.

The finds from Huseby Vestre provide evidence that points in the direction of a settlement or small 'productive site'. The finds of Viking Age artefacts are similar in nature to those that have been discovered at Kaupang, albeit in much smaller quantity – although Kaupang has been the object of extensive archaeological investigations, while the site at Huseby Vestre has as yet only been superficially investigated. Further excavations will probably not produce finds on the same scale as Kaupang, but might very well reveal more about the site.

The six dirham fragments from Huseby Vestre that it has been possible to date were all minted between 784/5 and 813/14.³² These seven stray finds date to the same period as a major part of the dirham finds from Kaupang. The date of production of the latest coin being 813/14 does, however, suggest that the activity on the site diminished in the ninth century rather than the tenth century, and thus earlier than at both Kaupang and Heimdalsjordet.³³

Broader analysis of Scandinavian hoards provides overwhelming evidence for the influx of Islamic silver being much more modest in Norway in the ninth and tenth centuries than in Sweden and Denmark. The largest hoard of Islamic coins in Norway contained 77 dirhams: the Grimstad hoard from Stokke in Vestfold, *TPQ* 921/2.³⁴ In comparison with the many large hoards from elsewhere in Scandinavia this is minute. The striking hoard found at Slemmedal near Grimstad in Aust-Agder (*c.* 150 kilometres south along the coast from Kaupang) dated *TPQ* 921 contained nearly three kilos of precious metal, gold (*c.* 400 g) and silver (*c.* 2,500 g), but only five coins: four Samanid dirhams and one Anglo-Viking penny of the *Sword St Peter* type, dated *c.* 921–7.³⁵ Finds of early Anglo-Saxon coins from the Viking Age are more numerous in Norway than the rest of Scandinavia, although still scarce in comparison to Islamic coins.³⁶ The Islamic dominance among finds of Norway of this period is less prominent than other

³¹ C. Kilger, *Vikingatida dirhamsspor & bosättningspår. Huseby Vestre, 87/12, Rygge, Østfold, Rapport arkeologisk utgraving*, Oslo (unpublished; Oslo, 2009), 13–14. An area of 50×50 metres was investigated, and seven trenches were opened. The use of metal detectors was instrumental in the search for metal objects. The investigations were conducted under the leadership of Dr Christoph Kilger on behalf of the Museum of Cultural History, 6–9 October 2008.

³² Kilger, *Vikingatida dirhamsspor*, 20–21.

³³ A Carolingian denier of the *Christiana religio* type was found at Kure Nordre in Rygge, in the vicinity of the Huseby Vestre site, UMK find no. 2165.

³⁴ Skaare, *Coins and Coinage*, 138 (no. 43).

³⁵ K. Skaare, 'Myntene i Slemmedal-skatten', *Viking* 1981, 32–43; see Screen, *SCBI* 65, no. 57 for the Anglo-Scandinavian *Sword St Peter* penny of York (*c.* 921–7).

³⁶ Screen, 'Norwegian coin finds'.

parts of Scandinavia, for example Sweden where Islamic dirhams (including the Volga-Bulgar issues) make up more than 99 per cent of all coins found.³⁷

However, the total of 76 dirhams found as strays at the Kaupang settlement in Vestfold is a high number compared to other similar settlements in Scandinavia.³⁸ The 182 dirhams from Heimdalsjordet and five additional finds of dirhams from different sites in Vestfold provide strong support for Blackburn's observations; the relation between the limited overall number of finds from Norway in ninth- and tenth-century contexts compared to those from the eleventh century, and the fact that the finds from Kaupang provide excellent and exceptional evidence for intense economic activity.³⁹

Other Single-Finds from Viken

In addition to the finds mentioned above, from Kaupang, Heimdalsjordet, Manvik and Rygge, another ten stray finds have been found in Viken: six Abbasid dirhams dated from AD 796/7 to 860/61, three Carolingian deniers in the name of Louis the Pious and the previously mentioned Byzantine *miliaresion* struck for John I Tzimisces (969–76). The finds are distributed unevenly between the east and the west sides of the fjord: four dirhams on the west side, six dirhams and one denier on the east side, while Oslo accounts for one dirham and two deniers. In sum, these finds suggest that dirhams and deniers were distributed into the hinterland, and into the purses and belongings of people living as farmers outside the markets and productive sites.⁴⁰

The chronology of the dirhams found as stray finds harmonises well with that of the dirhams from Kaupang and Rygge, and also the preliminary results of attributions of the dirhams from Heimdalsjordet. In this way these new finds correspond well with Blackburn's model for coin import in which the influx of dirhams to Scandinavia and Norway commenced in the period c.825–60 and lasted until the 890s. After this came a shift from Abbasid to Samanid dirhams in the find material. This was governed by political factors in the Caliphate rather than Viking society. In total the Samanid dirhams from Scandinavia

³⁷ K. Jonsson, 'Sweden in the tenth century: a monetary economy?', in *Silver Economies*, ed. Graham-Campbell, Sindbæk and Williams, 245–57, at 248.

³⁸ Blackburn, 'Coin finds', 48–51.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴⁰ In the vicinity of the Oslofjord area some finds further support this picture: an Abbasid dirham find (found c.1985) from Svinholt, Porsgrunn in Telemark, some 30 kilometres north of the outer Oslofjord (UMK find no. 2146); a Samanid dirham (found 2012) from Ringsaker in Hedmark, some 50 kilometres north of the inner Oslofjord (UMK find no. 2272); a *Christiana religio* denier (found 2012) struck for Louis the Pious in Quentovic c.822/3–840, from Vetten, Jessnes, Ringsaker, Hedmark (UMK find no. 2256).

substantially outnumber those of the Abbasids: in Sweden 38,523 (69 per cent) of dirham finds belong to the Samanids as opposed to 14,201 (25 per cent) for the Abbasids; in Norway the totals are 309 (58 per cent) and 179 (33 per cent) respectively.⁴¹ Even though the inflow of Abbasid dirhams went on for several decades longer in the ninth century than the import of Samanid dirhams in the tenth, the Samanid dirhams were much more numerous. However, this was not the case at Kaupang, where the Abbasid dirhams account for 81.8 per cent, and the ratio might be even higher in favour of Abbasid dirhams.⁴² In other words, Vestfold saw outstandingly rich importation and circulation of silver coins in the ninth century, but played a relatively small part in the heyday of the Scandinavian silver economy during the tenth. This should be interpreted in context of both the sites Kaupang and Heimdalsjordet being abandoned before mid-tenth century.

Currency and Kingship in Ninth-Century Vestfold

In many studies the Viking world is described as a homogeneous area when it comes to the use of money. This is in many respects correct, but when we consider the finds of coins from individual regions, towns and productive sites, it becomes evident that there were significant differences.

In the ninth century Vestfold was a kingdom that incorporated Lier and Eiker (in modern Buskerud). The first mention of Vestfold in documentary sources is a reference to the Danish kings Harald and Reginfred raising an army to suppress an uprising in *Westarfolda* in 813, in the north-western part of their kingdom.⁴³ Dagfinn Skre has suggested the Danish king was the founder of Kaupang around AD 800, and linked this with the adoption of a new continental concept of lordship, one that was territorially defined.⁴⁴ Danish influence both

⁴¹ Kilger, 'Kaupang from afar', 204.

⁴² Houshang Khazaei, Museum of Cultural History, University of Oslo, *pers. comm.*

⁴³ *Sed ad Westarfoldam cum exercitu profecti, quae regio ultima regni eorum inter septentrionem et occidentem sita ... cuius principes eis subici recusabant* ('but they set out with an army for Vestfold, the furthest region of their realm, situated between north and west ... whose chieftains were refusing to be subjected to them') *Annales regni Francorum* s.a. 813: MGH SS rer. Germ. 6, ed. G.H. Pertz and F. Kurze (Hannover, 1895), 130 and 138.

⁴⁴ D. Skre, 'Towns and markets, kings and central places in south-western Scandinavia c. AD 800–950', in *Kaupang in Skiringssal*, ed. D. Skre, Kaupang Excavation Project Publication Series, 1, Norske Oldfunn, 22 (Aarhus, 2007), 445–69, at 461–3. The Yngliga dynasty was based in Vestfold and was recognised in the *Beowulf* and the *Ynglingatal* as part of Snorre Sturlungson's *Heimskringla*. For a discussion of the validity of *Beowulf*'s reference to *Ynglingatal*, see G. Rausing, 'Beowulf, Ynglingatal and the Ynglingasaga. Fiction or history?', *Fornvännen*, 80 (1985), 163–78; and D. Skre, 'The dating of *Ynglingatal*', in *Kaupang in Skiringssal*, ed. Skre, 407–29.

politically and economically seems to have been significant at Kaupang. Danish overlordship did not, however, necessarily mean strict Danish control of trade at Kaupang. From a monetary perspective it is clear that Danish kings never took control of the circulation of coins and silver in any way that resembles the situation in Ribe or Hedeby. The one Danish penny struck at Ribe c.825–40 and found at Kaupang confirms Danish connections,⁴⁵ but cannot in any way be used as evidence for a controlled Danish currency in either Kaupang or Vestfold.

In his study of the conditions for trade at Kaupang, Skre has dismissed Richard Hodges' views on kingship and control of trade.⁴⁶ Instead he argues that 'production and trade grow out of natural conditions, social relationships, cultural norms and an economic agency – all of which lay well beyond the range of control of the earliest kings'.⁴⁷ Danish influence would, however, mean that Kaupang presumably was easily accessible and much used by Danish merchants. In this way Kaupang and Viken were closer to Europe through Denmark than by other routes. It is often difficult to make direct links between political history and coinage in regions that had not established coinage of their own, but there are certain points to be made in the case of Vestfold and its Danish connections.

Their many Viking expeditions made the *Westarfolda* well known from the eighth century onwards in Anglo-Saxon England, Carolingian Francia, and presumably also in the *Austerweg*. Vikings from Vestfold sailed out from Viken and many returned with valuable experience from foreign lands. With regard to coinage, it is evident that minting was never adopted in Vestfold or anywhere else within the Norwegian realm in the tenth century. And this in spite of Norway becoming one unified kingdom during the reign of king Harald Hårfagre (c.872–c.930). However fragile their kingdom may have been, there were several strong kings that ruled the country for long periods. In particular there were two important reigns: the first that of Harald Hårfagre, the second of his son Håkon the Good, Adelstainsfostre (c.933–961), who spent his entire adolescence in England at King Athelstan's court where he must have had first-hand experience of the English monetary system. Harald was a descent of the Ynglinga dynasty on his father's side. As he rose to power over Norway, the most common view today is that he ruled from western Norway from c.872 to his death in c.931.⁴⁸ How Vestfold was ruled at this time is uncertain, but from a numismatic point of view, evidence for a local coinage or local monetary economy has not been

⁴⁵ Blackburn, Jonsson and Rispling, 'Catalogue of the coins', 77 (no. 11).

⁴⁶ R. Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: the Origins of Towns and Trade, AD 600–1000* (London, 1982); for new edition of this book, see R. Hodges, *Dark Age Economics: a New Audit* (London, 2012).

⁴⁷ Skre, 'Post-substantivist towns', 340.

⁴⁸ P.S. Andersen, *Samlingen av Norge og kristningen av landet 800–1130* (Bergen, Oslo and Tromsø, 1977), 41–7.

detected in any part of the early Norwegian kingdom nor has any central control over the use of money been observed.

In this context the career of Eirik Bloodaxe provides an example of how a Norwegian could adopt minting in his own name at the middle of the tenth century under the right circumstances. After Eirik Haraldsson (son of Harald Hårfagre), better known as Eirik Bloodaxe, was driven out of Norway (having been king there from c.933 to c.935), he established himself as king of Northumbria in the year 948 and again 952–54.⁴⁹ In this position he issued coinage in his own name, ERIC REX, distinguished by the use of a sword as its main symbol across several issues. When Norwegians settled in places with monetary traditions, like Northumbria, they picked up and exploited local traditions of coinage and minting. That King Eirik did not establish a Norwegian coinage is obviously connected to the fact that he never returned to Norway.

To the south, the Danish king Harald Bluetooth (c.958–c.987) established Christianity as the dominant religion in a unified Denmark. During his long reign he introduced many measures and institutions of state-like character: the ring-forts at Trelleborg on Sjælland, Nonnebakken at Fyn, Fyrkat in central Jutland, Aggersborg alongside the Limfjord in Jutland and a second Trelleborg in Skåne. He also made an effort to establish a national coinage, which seems to have been only a partial success.⁵⁰ King Harald also made serious claims on Norway, and he *de facto* ruled Norway for some years in the beginning of the 970s.

This coincided with the import of silver dirhams from the Caliphate coming to a halt some decades before the large-scale influx of silver from Western Europe commenced. In this window that lasted for a few decades from around the 940s to the 980s, silver would have become a scarce commodity, at least in many parts of the Viking world. Empirically this is backed up by an overall trend in the hoard material, with fewer and smaller hoards being recorded within Norway from the decades 950s, 960s and 970s.⁵¹ The Norwegian material is rather limited; a much larger sample of material from Viking-Age Scandinavia provides evidence for this trend, but also for regional variations within southern Scandinavia.⁵²

⁴⁹ For a general account of Eirik Bloodaxe's history, see G. Williams, *Eirik Blodøks* (Hafrsfjord, 2010). Recently it has been argued that this Northumbrian Eric was not the Norwegian Eirik Bloodaxe, but another largely unknown Eric (C. Downham, 'Eric Bloodaxe – axed? The mystery of the last Scandinavian king of York', *Mediaeval Scandinavia*, 14 (2004), 51–77).

⁵⁰ J.C. Moesgaard, *King Harold's Cross Coinage* (forthcoming).

⁵¹ Skaare, 'Coins and coinage', 22–3, at table 9. The Norwegian material is rather limited; a much larger sample of material from Viking Scandinavia provides evidence for this trend, but also for regional variations within southern Scandinavia: C. von Heijne, *Särpräglat. Vikingatida och tidigmedeltida myntfynd från Danmark, Skåne, Blekinge och Halland (ca 800–1130)*, Stockholm Studies in Archaeology, 31 (Stockholm, 2004), 376–81.

⁵² C. von Heijne, *Särpräglat. Vikingatida och tidigmedeltida myntfynd från Danmark, Skåne, Blekinge och Halland (ca 800–1130)*, Stockholm Studies in Archaeology, 31 (Stockholm, 2004),

When silver became a scarce commodity within the Viking world, it was drawn out of areas on the periphery, like Norway, towards centres of economic and political power such as those associated with king Harald's rule in Denmark. The evidence for a drain of silver from a peripheral north, in this case Vestfold and Viken in Norway southwards to Denmark, is difficult to provide in the form of direct references in documentary sources or conclusive archaeological evidence. If a local coinage had been produced, it would have been possible to follow the distribution of local coins in the finds, and thereby establish a pattern of distribution. If Norway had natural silver resources, these could also have provided an excellent starting point for analyses of metallurgical trace elements in silver objects. But without any sources of this kind one must turn to slightly later material, from the 990s onwards, that can be appraised for a study of silver distribution taking Norway as a starting point.

The first Norwegian coinage struck in the name of the Viking king Olaf Tryggvesson (995–1000) provides evidence for the distribution of Norwegian silver.⁵³ Altogether only five specimens have been found, all of them outside Norway: one has been discovered in each of Gotland, Skåne, Fyn, Pomerania and possibly Uppland.⁵⁴ This means that two of the five specimens were hoarded within the Danish realm, and one most probably travelled through Danish territory on its way to Pomerania. This example indicates that silver minted in Norway was being drawn out of the Norwegian realm towards the south. After the 990s minting was not taken up again in Norway until after 1015, when Olaf Haraldsson (later Saint Olaf) gained power (r. 1015–28, d.1030). The coinage minted during Olaf's reign was also limited in scope, with only thirteen pennies recorded. Seven of these have been found outside Norway: three in Gotland and one each in Skåne, Finland, Öland, Poland and Schleswig-Holstein. In comparison only four have been found in Norway, three in Buskerud and one in Møre og Romsdal.⁵⁵

The next coinage produced in Norway was that of Harald Hardrade (1047–66) who returned from the Byzantine Empire and established a national currency.⁵⁶ After only a brief period at the start of his reign Harald's coins began to be heavily debased. A large share of his overall coinage was thus debased, but

376–81.

⁵³ For a discussion of the coinage in the name of Olaf Tryggvesson, see Brita Malmer, 'Numismatiken, Olof Skötkonung och slaget vid Svolder', *Scandia* 2008, 7–9.

⁵⁴ For a summary of the finds of Olaf Tryggvesson's pennies, see K. Skaare and J.S. Jensen, 'Olav Tryggvasons mønt', *Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad*, 4 (1993), 50–51.

⁵⁵ Skaare, 'Coins and coinage', 191–2.

⁵⁶ For general surveys of Harald Hardrade's coinage and monetary regime, see Skaare, 'Coins and coinage', 65–107; S.H. Gullbekk, 'Myntvesenet som kilde til statsutvikling i Norge ca.1050–1080', in *Statsutvikling i Skandinavia i middelalderen*, ed. S. Bagge, M.H. Gelting, F. Hervik, T. Lindkvist and B. Poulsen (Oslo, 2012), 76–100.

his very first issue was struck in good quality silver, and these pennies seem to have been drawn out of Norway in the same way. In total 21 pennies are known which have both a silver content of above 75 per cent and a find provenance: 11 of these have been found in Norway and ten outside Norway, in Gotland (4), Denmark (2), Sweden (2), the Faeroe Islands (1) and Russia (1).⁵⁷ It was only after the national currency was heavily debased that the export seems to have been interrupted. The evidence from export of coins from Norway in the period c.995 to c.1050 suggests that Norwegian coins of sterling quality soon became part of the silver flow and coin circulation within the northern lands. In this period one presumes that silver in other forms was also being drawn from Norway in the direction of Denmark, Skåne, Gotland. There are good reasons to believe that Norwegian coins also travelled towards Anglo-Saxon England even though the evidence for this appears slightly later, from the 1050s onwards.⁵⁸ The missing evidence is presumably explained by England's effective monetary regime, which guaranteed that imported coins were for the most part directed to the mints and reissued as local English pennies.⁵⁹

Conclusion

The many single-finds discovered in Vestfold and its surroundings during recent decades provide strong evidence for silver and coins being widely used and playing an important part in society in this part of the Viking world in the ninth, tenth and eleventh centuries. Whatever perspective one takes on numismatics, coinage and monetary history, the Viking Age represents a bridge between Iron Age and medieval Scandinavia, and a decisive period in the early phases of coinage and monetary history.

Vestfold most certainly played an important role in this development within the Norwegian part of the northern world. The existence of two sites with high numbers of Viking stray coin finds less than 20 kilometres from each other opens up new questions in both a Norwegian and a broader northern European context. As single-finds reflect accidental losses from circulation, they indicate

⁵⁷ Skaare, 'Coins and Coinage', 192–206.

⁵⁸ The Portable Antiquities Scheme Database records finds of two Harald Hardråde pennies: EMC 1997.0029 (Doncaster), 2001.1252 (Gainsborough); and seven pennies of Olaf Kyrre are recorded: EMC 1980.0033 (Thetford), 1983.9937 (Lincoln), 1991.0336 (London), 2007.0263 (Wimbotsham, Norfolk), 2012.0322 (Wordwell, Suffolk), 1987.0168 (Lincoln), 1989.0090 (Raunds, Northamptonshire).

⁵⁹ For a general discussion of wastage rates and re-export of Anglo-Saxon coins from Scandinavia back to England in the decades around the year 1000, see D.M. Metcalf, 'Some twentieth-century runes. Statistical analysis of the Viking-age hoards and the interpretation of wastage rates', in *Viking-Age coinage in the Northern Lands*, ed. Blackburn and Metcalf, 329–81.

the impressive scale of the Viking-Age silver currency in the area of Vestfold county, and suggest that it was among the wealthiest, not only in the Norwegian realm, but also within the Viking world. Hardly any region within the northern part of Viking-Age Scandinavia has a more striking assemblage of stray coin finds from ninth and tenth century than Vestfold. In this way new finds from recent years have only served to confirm Blackburn's conclusion that the coin finds from Kaupang provide evidence for intense use of coinage, on the same scale as at similar places elsewhere in Scandinavia.⁶⁰

The many new finds from Vestfold and its vicinity will probably be supplemented by more additions in the years to come, especially after further archaeological investigations of the Heimdalsjordet. In this way, the Kaupang material has become even more important, thanks to the comparative perspective supplied by single-finds, especially those from a nearby settlement that may have been of comparable size and function to Kaupang in the ninth and tenth centuries. This development would surely have fascinated Mark. I know he would have appreciated the new evidence, and been truly enthusiastic about the possibilities for new interpretations. With his immense knowledge of Viking-Age numismatics and the Norwegian Viking Age, including its archaeology and history (especially of the Vestfold and the Viken area), he would certainly have produced original insights and interpretations, and been enthusiastic and encouraging to others (such as myself) that shared his interest in these issues.

⁶⁰ Blackburn, 'The coin-finds', 72.