

The Damhus-hoard near Ribe, Denmark. New insight to early monetarism in Southern Scandinavia, 8.-9. Cent.

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In 2018 a coin hoard of 262 coins from first half of 9th century was excavated at Damhus – a small village less than 2 km from the emporium Ribe in South western Denmark. All the coins were of Malmers type KG4, variety face/deer and ship/deer. Before the discovery of the hoard a total of less than 30 coins were known of the two varieties. The hoard has markedly enlarged our knowledge of this coinage.

A die study gives insight to the organization and size of the coinage, while metal analysis reveals the sources of the many hundreds of kilos of silver that went into the coins.

Starting from the hoard, a short overview of the monetization of Southern Scandinavia in 8th-9th century is presented. Where and who used coins as coins and how are the relations to bullion economy.

At the emporium Ribe, Wodan/monster Sceattas was used as a controlled currency in 8th century, excluding foreign coins as Porcupine, other sceatta-varieties or Frankish denars. The same picture seems to evolve at the other emporiums in South Scandinavia, proposing one main royal issuer of coins to be used at the emporiums.

In 9th century there is a significant change, when different coin types are issued at the two main towns Hedeby and Ribe, excluding each other and resulting in a marked different regional coin distribution.

The situation around Ribe, and later Hedeby in 8th- 9th century, is not an easy straight forward road to a comprehensive use of coins. On the contrary. Bullion economy, chipped dirhams and hack-silver still dominates most of the silver economy of Scandinavia throughout the Viking Age.

