

Viking Congress 2021

Abstract/paper proposal

Theme: Power, Wealth and Resources / Making a Living: Trade, Networks and Towns

**Moneyers make the world go round: Anglo-Scandinavian coins as traces of Viking networks, resources and individuals.**

In the course of the Viking Age, Scandinavian Vikings came into contact with coins and minting in new ways. Voyages to the east opened up streams of Islamic (Cufic) and Byzantine coins, and from the south arrived in particular German coins. But only in the west, Anglo-Saxon England, did the Vikings both come into possession of local coins and produce their own, notably in York. As new local leaders in Anglo-Saxon towns, the Scandinavians quickly adapted to local ways of using coins and of manifesting supremacy. Although coins as such were known before by the Vikings, the art, organisation and technology of minting had to be learnt. This transfer of knowledge took place on workshop floors, through human interaction and learning processes. On another level it was made possible by the resources, power and wishes of prominent individuals. Eventually a domestic coinage, strongly inspired by the Anglo-Saxon, was initiated in Scandinavia as well.

It is generally assumed that most of the early Anglo-Viking coinage was produced by Anglo-Saxon moneyers, and that Scandinavian artisans gradually learnt the skill and trade from them. Moneyers' names in both areas testify to this process. To some extent, minting technology was however already known in parts of Scandinavia, as shown by the earliest coinages of Denmark. It is also assumed that the domestic coinages that started at the end of the tenth century were initially produced by Anglo-Saxons, who came to work for the kings of Denmark, Norway and Sweden, and who may have brought some of their dies with them. The result is a coin-network made up by dies similar to English ones, used in several places, and naming people and places in both Scandinavia and Anglo-Saxon England. While many dies are close imitations, names and styles yet gradually shifted into local ones. The coins provide glimpses into processes of transfer and change – of humans, artefacts, tastes and ideas – which also reveal actual events and some of the organisation behind Viking conquer, trade, kingship and technology.

The paper will concentrate on a few concrete cases where we may see such processes of transfer and change through the coin webs, and evaluate some of the possibilities and challenges of this evidence. One case is the moneyer Leofwine, who seems to have worked in Scandinavian Lund at the time of Cnut the Great and Harthacnut after being active in several Anglo-Saxon mints. Several things bear witness to the presence of Anglo-Saxon artisans in Lund at this time, and even a few artefacts relating to one 'Leofwine' have been found. But was he a moneyer? And to what extent may we trust the testimony of imitations?

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