

*Chris Scott*

# 47th Sachsensymposium

## The Making of Kingdoms



York

22nd - 26th September, 1996

# The 47th Sachsensymposium

An International Conference on the theme 'The Making of Kingdoms'  
held at the King's Manor, University of York, and the Yorkshire Museum,  
York, 22nd - 26th September, 1996

The symposium has been generously aided

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and with support from:

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York Visitor and Conference Bureau

THE UNIVERSITY *of York*  
DEPARTMENT OF  
ARCHAEOLOGY



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*Front Cover:* Post-Crondall pale-gold tremissis (or thrymsa) of 'Carausius' type, probably from eastern Kent; obverse redrawn by Helen Geake.

# Programme

## Saturday 21st September

4.30 - 6.00: Registration: Dept of Archaeology, King's Manor (room G61).

## Sunday 22nd September

10.00 - 17.30: Registration: Dept. of Archaeology, King's Manor (room G61).

13.30/14.00: Tour of Roman and Anglian York (Group A leaves St George's Carpark, Fishergate at 13.30; Groups B and C Department of Archaeology, King's Manor at 13.45 & 14.00 respectively)

16.00: Tea: Dept. of Archaeology, King's Manor

17.30: The Tempest Anderson Hall, Yorkshire Museum  
Welcome from the Yorkshire Museum

Introduction to the Coppergate helmet:  
Jim Spriggs: 'Discovery and conservation'  
Dominic Tweddle: 'Archaeological Interpretation'  
Questions and comments

Reception in St Mary's Abbey Gallery. The Roman and Medieval galleries will be open for viewing.

19.30: Evening free

## Monday 23rd September

8.30 - 18.00: Registration: Dept. of Archaeology, King's Manor (room G61).

9.00: Lectures: Tempest Anderson Hall, Yorkshire Museum

Tania Dickinson: 'Welcome'  
Martin Carver: 'The making of kingdoms: introduction to the theme'

9.30: Chris Scull: 'Is this state formation? Archaeology and Anglo-Saxon kingdom-origins'

10.00: Kerstin Lidén: 'The archaeology of rank, by means of diet, gender and kinship'

10.30: Coffee (King's Manor, G60)

- 11.00: Morten Axboe: 'Danish kings and dendrochronology '
- 11.30: Charlotte Fabech: 'Organising the landscape. A matter of production, power and religion'
- 12.00: Jytte Ringtved: 'The geography of power. South Scandinavia before the Danish Kingdom'
- 12.30: Lunch
- 14.00: Ulf Näsman: 'The ethnogenesis of the Danes and the making of a Danish kingdom'
- 14.30: Anne Nørgård Jørgensen: 'Reflections on the military and naval development of the early Danish state'
- 15.00: Marianne Schaumann-Lönqvist: 'The West-Finnish warriors and the early Svea kingship'
- 15.30: Tea (King's Manor, G 60)
- 16.00: Ulf Viking: 'The Vittene Treasure - evidence for a Roman Iron Age cult-centre in south-western Sweden?'
- 16.15: Nick Higham: '*Imperium* in early Britain: rhetoric and reality in the writings of Gildas and Bede'
- 16.45: Barbara Yorke: 'The origins of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms: the contribution of written sources'
- 17.15: Julian Richards: 'What's so special about "productive sites"? MiddleAnglo-Saxon settlement types in Northumbria'
- 18.00 - 21.00: Reception and excursions in York, courtesy of the York Archaeological Trust:-
- 18.00 Group A (surnames A - F + H) to Barley Hall (BH), Coffee Yard, off Stonegate, for medieval 'plate' supper;  
Group B (surnames G + K - R) to Jorvik Viking Centre, Coppergate (JVC);  
Group C (surnames S - Y) to Archaeological Resource Centre (ARC), St Saviour's Church, St Saviourgate
- 19.00 Group A to JVC; Group B to ARC; Group C to BH
- 20.00 Group A to ARC; Group B to BH; Group C to JVC

N.B. The success of the evening requires that groups move from venue to venue on time, and that group numbers are even! Please do not switch group unless you can find someone to swap with.

### **Tuesday 24th September**

- 9.00am - 18.00pm: All-day excursion to Anglo-Saxon settlements and churches to the north and north-east of York

## Wednesday 25th September

- Lectures: Tempest Anderson Hall, Yorkshire Museum
- 9.00: Mark Whyman: 'Romano-Saxon pottery, class identity and the origin of kingdoms in fifth-century Yorkshire'
- 9.30: Lucas Quensel-von Kalben: 'Continuity and change in Early Anglo-Saxon England - some preliminary results of an inter-regional cemetery analysis'
- 10.00: Nick Stoodley: 'Burial rites, gender and the creation of kingdoms: the evidence from 7th century England'
- 10.30: Coffee (King's Manor, G60)
- 11.00: Helen Geake: 'Invisible kingdoms: the use of grave-goods in 7th-century England'
- 11.30: Karen Høilund Nielsen: 'Style II and the Anglo-Saxon élite (late 6th - 7th centuries)'
- 12.00: Bente Magnus: 'Old kingdoms and new? Late Style I and Style II in middle and north Sweden'
- 12.30: Jan Peder Lamm: 'A unique gold bracteate from Uppland'
- 12.45: Lunch
- 14.00: Margrethe Watt: 'Kings or Gods? The iconographic evidence of Scandinavian gold foil figures ("guldgubber")'
- 14.30: Frands Herschend: 'The kingship in the hall'
- 15.00: Lotte Hedeager: 'Myth and Art: a passport to political authority in Early Medieval kingdoms'
- 15.30: Tea (King's Manor, G60)
- 16.00: Alan Vince: 'Studying the making of kingdoms through ceramics'
- 16.30: Peter Addyman: 'Eboracum to Eoforwic: from provincial capital to royal city'
- 17.00: Kevin Leahy: 'The formation of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Lindsey'
- 17.30: Meeting of the co-ordinating committee of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Sachsenforschung (Department of Archaeology, King's Manor, K157)
- 19.30: Reception hosted by Centre for Medieval Studies: Huntingdon Room, King's Manor
- 20.00: Dinner: The Refectory, King's Manor
- 22.-23.00: Cash bar: Huntingdon Room, King's Manor

## Thursday 26th September

- Lectures: Tempest Anderson Hall, Yorkshire Museum
- 9.00: John Hines: 'The Cambridgeshire Region in Anglo-Saxon social and political history'
- 9.30: Tim Malim: 'The cemetery at Edix Hole, Barrington, Cambridgeshire, and its contemporary landscape'
- 10.00: Cathy Haith: 'Buckland Anglo-Saxon cemetery, Dover, Kent'
- 10.30: Coffee (King's Manor, G60)
- 11.00: Sue Hirst and Dido Clark: 'Mucking Cemetery II, Essex'
- 11.30: Danny Gerrets and Anthonie Heidinga: 'The Frisian achievement'
- 12.00: W.J.H. Verwers: 'The development of Dorestad'
- 12.30: 'The making of kingdoms': concluding general discussion
- 13.00 End of symposium and departure

## **Poster-sessions**

**Department of Archaeology, King's Manor, Room KG60**

The chronology of the gold bracteates (Morten Axboe)

Archive of Anglo-Saxon pottery stamps (Diana Briscoe)

Punchmarks on Anglo-Saxon metalwork from East Anglia (Catherine Mortimer)

Between Scheldt and Weser. Frisia in Northwest European perspective (Danny Gerrets and Anthonie Heidinga)

Ship blockages in the Danish territory (Anne Nørgård Jørgensen)

Barrington Edix Hill cemetery and the landscape of the Cambridgeshire Dykes (Tim Malim)

Sutton Hoo (Martin Carver)

St Gregory's Minster, Kirkdale: inscription on lead (Philip Rahtz)

Recent work (York Archaeological Trust)

**Monday, 23rd September only, in KG62**

The Anglo-Saxon site at West Heslerton, N. Yorks: demonstration of computerised analysis (James Lyall on behalf of the West Heslerton Parish Project)

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Is this state formation? Archaeology and Anglo-Saxon kingdom origins

## Summary

The existence of kings and kingdoms in Anglo-Saxon England is attested in written sources of the 7th century and later, but there is little or no reliable written evidence relating to the 5th- and 6th-century societies from which the Middle Saxon kingdoms emerged. The question of kingdom origins therefore has to be studied across the interface between the historical period of the 7th century and later and the pre- or proto-history of the 5th and 6th centuries, for which the primary source is archaeology.

This paper is concerned aspects of society and economy which may have contributed to the development of hierarchical political structures and the formation of local or regional political aggregations in the 5th and 6th centuries, and so which may have governed the development and consolidation of the Middle Saxon kingdoms. It aims to examine the material evidence for social and economic dynamics against generalizing models of state formation and more specific models which have been proposed to explain the development of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms, and to draw some comparisons between the patterns of development apparent in 5th- and 6th-century England and those identified elsewhere in north-west Europe.

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## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF RANK, BY MEANS OF DIET, GENDER AND KINSHIP

Identifying the sex of individuals from prehistoric cemeteries is crucial for a subsequent analysis of the social and biological structure, e.g. rank, of ancient societies. When sex is determined, males and females can be compared with regard to nutritional status, diet, physical stress, life expectancy, and material status. Further, diet is a well known indicator of rank and has as such been used in archaeological studies. Kinship is also of utmost interest when discussing problems concerning the making of kingdoms in order to discriminate between inherited and acquired rank.

The problem of sex identification of non-complete skeletons, very young individuals, and cremated bones can now be overcome by the use of molecular sex identification. X and Y chromosome specific sequences, based on the amelogenin sequence, are used for molecular sex identification.

Different access to different food sources such as protein, or specific crops, e.g. maize, is traced in the skeletal remains of humans. Stable isotope and trace element analyses on bone provide information on the major food sources in the diet.

Kinship within a cemetery is possible to study by the use of parts of the inherited genome, so called Short Tandem Repeats (STR markers) or by the use of maternally inherited hypervariable sequences.

Rank can thus be studied by the use of chemical and biological analyses of skeletal remains and information obtained on whether it was based on gender, kinship or other social factors. The study of rank by the use of these methods are being applied within the "SIV-project" (Svealand in the Vendel and Viking Periods: Settlement, Society and Power) and results from the project will be presented.

## Danish Kings and Dendrochronology

Morten Axboe

In the later years dendrochronology has provided unusually exact dates for Iron and Viking Age finds and features, especially large defence works. Together with the written sources, the weapon deposits, the settlements with specially rich finds, and the inferences on social stratification which have been drawn from graves and hoards, they testify to the social and political developments which resulted in the Danish kingdom as we meet it in the Viking Age.

1. Jellinge - complex of large halls  
c. 800 - 820 AD

2. Ribe - West part of the wall  
c. 800 - 820 AD

Abstract

## **Organising the landscape.**

### **A matter of production, power, and religion.**

*Charlotte Fabech, University of Aarhus, Dept. of Archaeology*

Recently, finds and investigations in South Scandinavia of new sites with preserved occupation layers and plenty of metal small finds have caused an increasing interest in the question of central places during the first millennium A.D. Individual sites like Helgö in Lake Mälaren, Gudme/Lundeberg on Fyn, or Sorte Muld on Bornholm play central rôles in the discussion. Gold, silver, precious objects, and imports occur in such profusion on these sites that they appear to be something quite extraordinary in the archaeological record. The question is however, whether this is a true picture or whether our impression suffers from source-critical weaknesses.

We know that Migration period gold finds like bracteates, foil figures, continental objects, etc. are to be found on sites attached to the contemporary aristocracy. Thus these finds can give us an outline of the landscape of power during the Migration period, in the same way as churches, manors, and royal estates reveal the high medieval geography of power: rich graves, runestones, and silver hoards show similar phenomena in the Viking Age.

We now realise that we behind extraordinary gold finds, etc. can expect settlements of central significance, and during the last years a number of such sites have been partially excavated. So now we know that the "central places" have had various functions, and that they are placed on different levels in the hierarchy of Iron Age society. But we must also realise that we still have a long way to go before a general understanding of the variation and structure of central places, whether internally or externally, is attained.

To reach an understanding of the central places we need the cultural landscape as a backdrop. The most important tools in our analysis are time, space, and a cross-disciplinary approach.

In my paper I will present examples from Denmark and south Sweden in order to elucidate how we when combining archaeological, geographical, historical, and onomastic sources can identify various aristocratic settings and how we can describe the organisation and ideal behind them.



Abstract

## **The geography of power South Scandinavia before the Danish Kingdom**

*Jytte Ringtved, University of Aarhus, Dept. of Archaeology*

The paper discusses possible political units in Denmark before the unification (late Roman and Migration Period). Various scenarios have been suggested lately, ranging from strong tendencies to unification and centralization of the power versus a dispersed political structure involving many small units, autonomous or paying tribute to the more influential ones. Which sources can elucidate this theme and what do they tell us?

A classification and ranking of settlements is the first important step in analyzing the political geography of the Later Iron Age. The next step may be to look for regional explanations of the differentiation of settlements in the various types of landscape. Finally, it is important to display the development of the regions and the changing power relations in a wider geographical and political perspective.

The high-ranking settlements must be understood as reflections of elite milieus. The most important factor for the placing of these settlements in the landscape seems to be communication. Junctions of main waterways and landroutes are key points in the landscape. The reconstruction of the communication routes of the period rests on features in the natural landscape such as watersheds and -crossings combined with cultural geographical zones and settlement concentrations (bygder).

Local and regional variations exist in material culture and settlement structure. Some are obviously due to the fact, that the archipelago of South Scandinavia is a zone of contact for influences from among others the North Sea-region and the Baltic. Others seem to reflect more fundamental differences in the identity of the folk-groups and the social and political structure. This is the necessary background on which the manifestations of power must be understood and the matter of dominion and hegemony discussed.

Abstract

## **The ethnogenesis of the Danes and the making of a Danish kingdom**

*Ulf Näsman, University of Aarhus, Dept. of Archaeology*

In Scandinavia the periods from the Roman Iron Age to the Viking Age are prehistoric, in fact prehistory lingered on till the thirteenth century. But Scandinavian archaeologists often forget or ignore the fact that the first millennium A.D. is a historical period in central and southern Europe, and unfortunately, the Scandinavian development is too often evaluated in isolation from Europe. The material culture studied by archaeology demonstrates that interaction with continental as well as insular powers continuously influenced the social development of Scandinavia. Thus an historical approach to Scandinavian late prehistory is necessary, and a European perspective must be applied.

Outside the Roman Empire the first to fifth centuries A.D. were a period of reaction against and adaptation to the Mediterranean civilisation. Historically, this implies that the perspective of the Germanic-Roman interaction has to be used also when viewing the development in Denmark during the "Roman Iron Age". The Migration period of Scandinavia cannot be understood without paying regard to the strong impact of Byzantium and the Germanic-Roman successor kingdoms. The social transformations among continental and insular Germanic societies that were influenced by the successor kingdoms were certainly paralleled in Scandinavia.

The headline "The Germanic attempts at organisation" used by Le Goff to characterise the Frankish realm can without difficulty be applied to a description of the Merovingian period and the Viking Age of Scandinavia. South Scandinavia was linked to France and Germany, as well as to England, and the Danish development was certainly part of a common west European trajectory.

The traditional views that Scandinavia entered the west European socio-political scene only at the very end of the Viking Age, that the Christianisation was a decisive historical turning-point, that the pagans were unable of organisation and that a state formation in Scandinavia therefore is unthinkable before, seem all to be erroneous. The Christianisation was only the last step of a long unstable winding staircase leading to the Scandinavian Middle Ages. In my opinion, the main contribution the Scandinavians made to "the formation of Christian Europe" was not the Conversion but their commercial and political activities during the preceding centuries.

Unfortunately, the ethnogenesis of the Danes is beyond the reach of study, but a rough hypothesis may be formulated. Events outside the South Scandinavian scene were of fundamental importance for the possibility of this Danish *gens* to grow in power in the Late Roman and Migration periods. The Danes could already during the Merovingian period usurp power over the important channels of communication between Scandinavia proper and the Continent. On the basis of this key position, a kingdom was created. Its survival was by no means a matter of course. In continued efforts to secure the Danish position against the attacks of the neighbours, capable kings established the borders of high medieval Denmark in the course of the Viking Age.

Reflections on the military and naval development of the early Danish state.  
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Comprehensive archaeological material in the form of off-shore defence works -- constructions of stakes, stones, box caissons, sunken ships, etc.) in the mouths of fjords and bays -- is available for cultural analysis of the military organisation of the Iron Age, Viking Age, and early Middle Ages Denmark. In this paper I have chosen to place emphasis on an analytical presentation of off-shore defence works in general in Denmark; the focus of the subject then takes a turn towards the interpretation-possibilities related to the earliest barrage-structures in the first millennium AD.

Seen from the perspective of defence, Danish territory, with a coastline over 7,400 km in length, is particularly vulnerable to overseas attack. The coastline, with innumerable inlets, also offers opportunities for the strategically well-planned placing of important centres inside a sheltered fjord-area protected by one or more off-shore works. Another reason for off-shore defence-works may have been for the control of sailing in and out of Danish waters, which must have played an important role for local people and persons of authority at any time.

The relatively large scale of the country's territorial waters has also had the effect that throughout virtually the whole of the known part of the country's military history there has been special emphasis on the sea-going part of military organisation. And in some periods this was probably well put to the test, even though we do not have direct evidence as to the underlying organisational system.

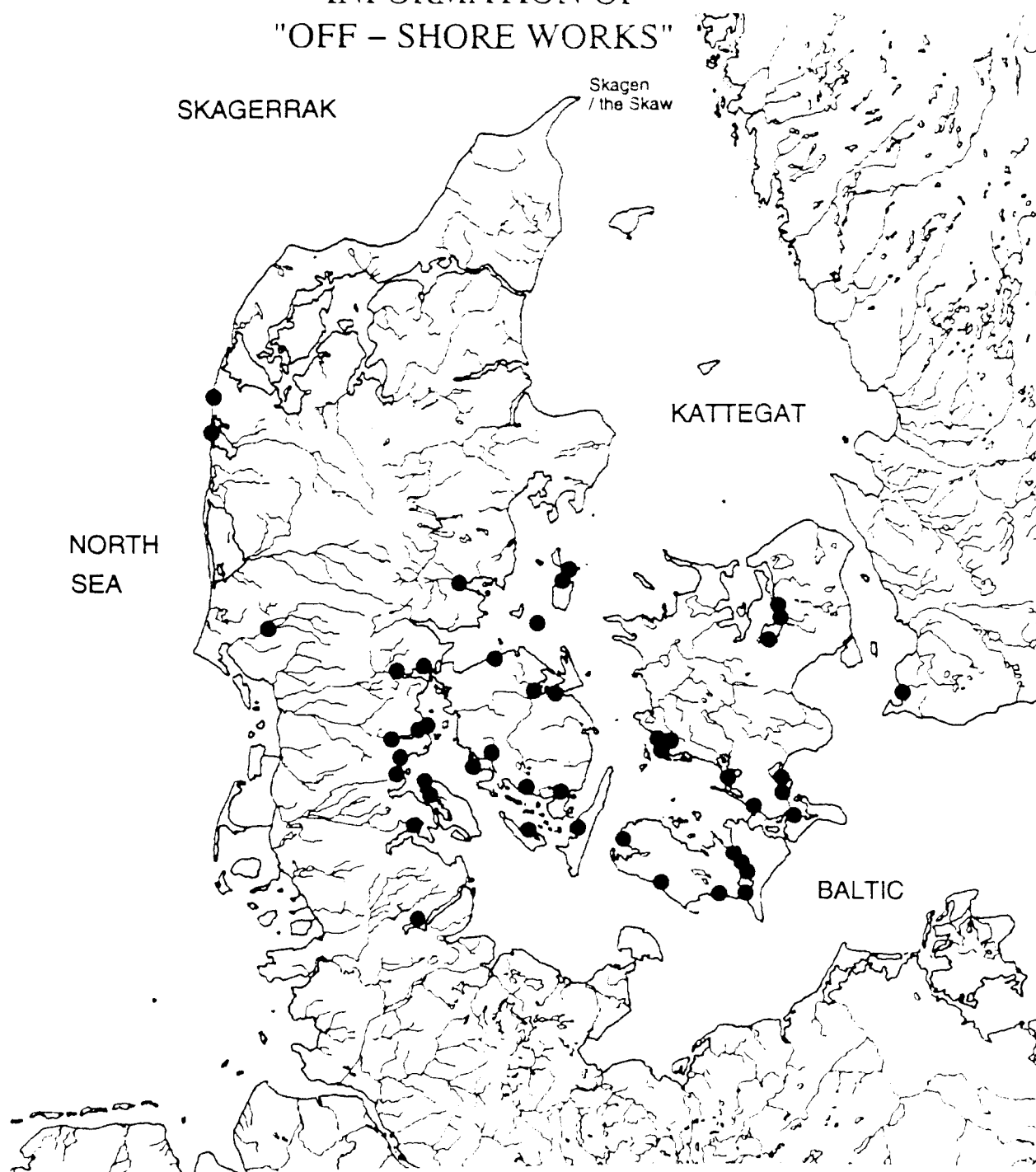
It is obvious that the building of off-shore defence works can have various causes, and that these defence works came into being in response to different needs -- those of the local population or of the nobles, or by royal order. In some cases they consist of obstructions of access to natural harbours, and in certain of these cases there is a congruence with written information about naval bases. In other cases it is a matter of protection of royal property or the land of a local potentate. Finally, there is a congruence between off-shore defence works and historical information about attacks in vulnerable areas of the Danish kingdom in the 12th century.

The connection between, on the one hand, the level of military organisation, and, on the other, the sea defence "situation" is of great significance if we are to explore new aspects of the history of Denmark during the process of development from tribally-based military organisation, through early royal power, to the institutionalisation of military organisation

which took place in historic time. The question is: can one find support in the off-shore defence works, and by that route gain an impression of at which periods the country was the object of particularly major threats from overseas, or when the local fleet could have been an instrument of royal power in Danish history.

The Danish off-shore defence works, as already mentioned, have a broad dating frame, stretching back to the time before the birth of Christ and on to the Middle Ages, and in this contribution I intend to describe the cultural-historical and military-historical context in which the off-shore defence works occur in the period from the Late Roman Iron Age up to the time of establishment of the earliest Danish navy, around the year 700.

### INFORMATION OF "OFF - SHORE WORKS"



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### **The Vittene Treasure - Evidence for a Roman Iron Age Cult-centre in south-western Sweden?**

In the summer of 1995 a gold torc was found by a man while mowing the lawn in the garden. This was to be the startingpoint of a series of more or less remarkable events leading to the discovery of the third largest Iron Age treasure ever to be found in Sweden. The find, consisting of four gold torcs and an armring, has become known as the "Vittene Treasure" after the name of the farm on which it was found.

The archaeological trial excavation that was carried out on the site, revealed rich prehistoric deposits. During the excavation another torc was found in the settlement area. After a metal detector survey on the site the find increased to the final four gold torcs and an armring. The rings, that have been dated to 100 BC - 200 A D, had been submitted to ritual destruction such as burning and bending before being deposited within the settlement site.

The settlement is located in a agrarian landscape with a historical continuity from the neolithic period to the high tech farming community of today.

During the first centuries A D Western Scandinavia can be characterized by economic expansion and social stratification. An expanding import of jewellery, roman luxury goods and the existence of weaponfinds in graves, indicates the formation of an elite during this period. In this setting the rise of political/ritual centres was made possible.

The settlement site has been preliminary dated to 100 BC - 200 AD. The accumulation of wealth as indicated by the treasure could indicate that the establishment and function of the site should be connected to the mentioned processes of centralizing, while the destruction of the torcs point towards ritual practice.

The Vittene Archaeological Project have during 1996 been formed by the local county museum, The Museum of National Antiquities, Stockholm and the Department of Archaeology, University of Gothenburg. The project will primarily focus on further archaeological excavation of the site in order to gain more information about its dating and function within the processes of centralization during the Iron Age.

Imperium in early Britain: rhetoric and reality in the writings of Gildas and Bede

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Neither Gildas nor Bede set out to describe the political structures of their own communities, but each wrote from a specific, current political perspective. That of Bede is the more transparent and it is often possible to trace the impact of his perspective on the past about which, in his Historia, he was ostensibly addressing. Gildas, in contrast, wrote a far more obviously polemical work. It is equally anchored in his own current perspective but poses much greater problems today for those wishing to reconstruct the political systems of his own generation, with nothing more to go on than his writing.

To Gildas, first, therefore: when attempting to reconstruct the fall of Britain, he envisaged Roman imperial rule via governors giving way with Magnus Maximus to a single, pan-British authority which he adjudged a tyranny, which then descended via unnamed and unworthy successors to the anonymous figure whom we know as Vortigern. Again, he is an antithetical figure within the text, but Gildas portrayed him as another pan-British figure up to the point where he met with his councillors and devised a plan to protect the 'homeland' - which involved employing Saxon mercenaries. He was, however, the last British figure whom Gildas treated as if ruler of all of what had been Roman Britain. By contrast, the idealised Ambrosius Aurelianus, who resisted the Saxon rebels, was leader of only a fragment of the Britons and was accorded no official title, and the tyrants of the present were clearly more localised figures. This text does, therefore, offer a cut-off for the political unity of sub-Roman Britain, which coincides with what Professor Thompson long-since dubbed 'the war of the Saxon federates'.

In his own times, Gildas portrayed parts of western Britain as ruled by five kings whose moral shortcomings were such that he termed them tyrants and railed against them. They were not, however, portrayed as entirely equal, although Gildas certainly acknowledged their individual moral responsibility. Rather, Maglocunus, the 'dragon of the isle' was given very different treatment to that of the other four such that implies that he was their senior in status, although how this difference manifested itself in practice is difficult to know. This implies that some sort of 'overkingship' existed in Wales and the south west peninsula when Gildas was writing.

Nor was this all. There are very slight hints of an unequal political relationship between Maglocunus and some still greater military leader: Maglocunus was, for example, only 'greater than many in power' and 'almost the most powerful dux in Britain'. The identity of the more powerful figure implicit in the text is not established, but association of the British tyrants with a 'devil-father' figure in three different passages elsewhere may imply that Gildas had a Saxon leader in mind, since he characterised Vortigern's mercenaries as barbarians, animals, heathen and devils during his description of their rebellion and

ravaging of Britain.

However hesitant our understanding of Gildas's De Excidio, therefore, there is evidence within it which implies that the society with which he was familiar had some sort of hierarchical and interactive vision of kingship, certainly within western, British Britain, but perhaps also in a wider context. Patronage of churchmen was clearly an integral part of that kingship at all levels.

Bede's treatment of imperium is far easier to grasp. Looking back to a distant Roman rule of Britain, he envisaged a situation in which the Britons were ruled by their own kings, perhaps even in an insular hierarchy, but under the broad umbrella of the imperium of the Roman emperors and the Roman people. In this respect, his treatment of the imperial past depended heavily on his perception of the present and the ladder of royal authority with which he was himself familiar, and offers valuable insights to those same perceptions. Bede's treatment of various later English 'overkings' was sufficiently detailed to allow us to at least sketch out the main factors which underpinned their power, and even the ways in which these changed through time.

Perhaps the most important single factor was a significant military victory. Many great 'overkings', such as Raedwald or Oswald, seem to have become dominant immediately after achieving a spectacular victory over a prestigious opponent. Such presumably led their contemporaries to view them as particularly god-favoured, and the more improbable the win the greater the impact. In consequence, other kings seem to have sought their protection. When every king did this - as occurred according to Bede following Edwin's great victory over the West Saxons in 626 - then the resulting 'overkingship' was universal. It was certainly not only the people who had been defeated who recognised the superiority of an 'overking' - and Edwin's control over the see of Canterbury provides a good example in support of this point.

Several kings clearly established substantial military reputations by repeated victories: the obvious examples were Aethelfrith of the Bernicians and Penda of the Mercians. But war was not the only method used by even non-Christian kings to sustain high status. Aethelfrith's apparent responsibility for the development of a royal palace, meeting place and cult centre at Yeavering looks very much like an initiative designed to enhance his own imperial pretensions - and the timber theatre is very suggestive of royal ceremonial. Additionally, Aethelfrith was one of many kings who used marriage as a political tool. His usurpation of the Deiran kingship c. 604 was legitimised by marriage to a princess of the local royal house, whose dynastic interest then passed to his own sons, Oswald and Oswiu, both of whom eventually became kings of the Deiri.

Not all early 'overkings' are, however, known to have had a military reputation based on victory. The principal exception is Aethelberht of Kent, whom Bede does not credit with any sort of warlike activity. Rather, his 'overkingship' seems to have

depended primarily on ties of kinship with neighbouring peoples - including the Franks and East Saxons - so his capacity to raise a significant force at need. It seems pertinent to contrast the 'hard' characteristics of Aethelfrith's more warlike regime in the north with the 'soft' style of his southern contemporary, Aethelberht of Kent.

It is also worth noting that it was the regime which was apparently short on military cuedos which offered the more fertile ground for Christian missionaries. Aethelberht's entire reign seems to have been in partnership with courtier bishops - first the Frankish Liudhard and then the Italians, Augustine, Laurence and Iustus. Aethelberht's willingness to accept baptism in the mid-590s was probably very largely a diplomatic ploy to realign himself with the increasingly dominant Merovingian court of Childibert and his sons. Having done so, however, he discovered that the hierarchical organisation of the Christian clerisy, its monotheism, its regularisation of ritual and its vision of authority offered considerable political opportunity to enhance his own status and perhaps even expand his hegemony still further. The baptism of Raedwald of the East Angles at Canterbury looks very much like an exercise in the reinforcement of his 'overkingship' vis-a-vis a powerful, mature and peripheral, subordinate king. Augustine's dealings with the British clergy are likely to have been perceived by the king himself as opening the door to the expansion of his own superiority over British kings.

In the north, a generation later, both Edwin and then Oswiu used Christian cult as part of a package of strategies designed to enhance their own political positions. The baptismal sites associated with Edwin and his development of York as a new cult centre at the heart of his own regime reveal much about his activities as king and the geography of his power. Edwin's export of Christianity to the East Angles, in particular, was a clear indication of his concern to dominate that dynasty, and his correspondence with the papacy as the king responsible for both Canterbury and York reflects his determination to impose himself on the Christian clerisy of both the southern and northern synods. Bede, of course, viewed Edwin's keen support of missionary activity as spiritually motivated but that is most unlikely to have been the whole story. This is not to suggest that Edwin was a cynical manipulator of Christian priests. Rather, both he and they recognised the potential for mutual benefit offered by their co-operation and advanced the natural sylloge between royal and episcopal objectives. The end result was Christian kingship among the English, with the greater 'overkingships' of the north and Midlands developing into Northumbrian and Southumbrian realms which mirrored the two synods and metropolitans which Gregory had envisaged in 601, but which only became permanently established after Bede's death.



