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Reply

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Reply

Johan Callmer's paper is an interesting contribution to the debate including a number of detailed and valuable notes. Naturally, however, I found it a fierce attack on both the results and the method of my research, and so I am grateful to have been given the opportunity of replying to it on its first publication. His paper is meant to be a serious tribute to the research concerned with the Viking Age coin hoards, but in my opinion it seems to be rich in deliberate misunderstandings and misinterpretations of my statements. I quoted older datings made by Schnittger and Montelius to explain why it is that the year 800 has become so fixed in the minds of archaeologists as the year marking the beginning of the Viking Age. This I did, of course, by way of comparison only. To begin with I wish to point out that as means of dating I have used only coins and no nonmonetary objects. The latter will often have been dated just because of their occurrence together with coins.

Callmer seems to believe that, in my research, I have worked with the preconceived intention to prove and advocate the dominance of Svealand over the backward South Sweden and Denmark by wanting to demonstrate that the Oriental coins first reached the Mälars Valley before Gotland and before the rest of Scandinavia. I have, however, worked without any preconceived opinions whatsoever with no other intention but to lay bare the pattern of the influence that reached us from the east. Having worked with the finds of Oriental coins from our Viking Age for more than 35 years, I have been able to discern more and more clearly the tendency that I wished to demonstrate in my brief paper in *Fornvännen* 1974. With that paper I have only superficially skimmed a much larger material, which I have been collecting for many years in order to work on the early finds of Oriental coins in Swe-

den: those deposited as early as the 8th century and those belonging in the first half of the 9th. Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to assemble this material into the collected publication that I have in mind.

However, in my paper I put forward my opinions chiefly from the numismatological point of view. My datings apply to the coins and not to the nonmonetary components of the hoards. I find it, however, hard to realize why the datings of the objects should be more inflexible than those of the coins. If, at one time, a researcher as a working hypothesis has dated an object to the 10th century, it is not inconceivable that his dating — whatever it may refer to — may have been too late. Actually, the object in question may turn out to belong in the 9th century. Or the dating may be too early — subsequent research may show that the objects in question do not turn up until the 11th century. This as an entirely abstract instance.

To begin with the very oldest material, Callmer in his paper refuses to recognize the quiet evidence of the grave-finds as bearing any value whatsoever in support of my thesis that the Oriental coins begin to trickle into Scandinavia already in the first half of the 8th century. In this connection he accuses me of having asserted that "a coin in a grave gives a firm date", i. e. "the date of the coin plus a number of years known to us". A modern numismatist neither thinks nor works along those lines.

As a numismatist I naturally always count with a *terminus post quem* for a hoard — obviously it can not have been deposited before the dating of the latest coin. If, for instance, the latest coins of an (Arabic) hoard are from 963 A. D., the time of deposit is dated in the universally accepted terminology to "after 963 A. D.". The number of years to be added to this date has to be estimated by other methods, among which the *argu-*

menta ex silentio at times have proved very useful — what is missing in a hoard (such as certain groups of coins, certain dynasties, certain late rulers=issuers of coins) can frequently be an indication for the dating of its deposit. A purely Oriental-Arabic hoard, without as much as one single of the later so common coins of the Samānid princes, was no doubt deposited before 870 A. D. (or earlier still). If the hoard contains Samānid dirhams, but for instance no Byzantine, it is likely to have been deposited 960—970 A. D. (As a matter of fact, early Byzantine and Frankish coins have, on the whole, only been found in the Birka graves. Cf. the articles by N. L. Rasmuson and Hans Holst on *Byzantinska mynt* in *Kulturhistoriskt Lexikon del II.*) If German coins occasionally occur in the hoard, we rapidly arrive in the 980's, and with the introduction of the English coins we find ourselves in the time after about 990 A. D.

Callmer has, point by point, gone through my list of finds of early Oriental coins and, after a very weak argumentation, he accuses me of scientific unreliability.

Indeed, it is true that the list was made under the pressure of time, and I was driven hard by my benevolent, exceedingly knowledgeable but at times somewhat aggressive friend and colleague Michael Dolley, who helped me with translation and formulations. I owe it to him that these formulations then sometimes happened to be somewhat sharp. We agreed, however, to leave them alone for the express purpose of stirring up a debate on a line of thinking which, in my (and also in Dolley's) opinion was too standardized, concerning the beginning of the Viking Age round about the sacrosanct year 800 A. D. I am the first to applaud that the debate has begun now, but I hope that it will continue with criticism more based on numismatics.

Among other things, Callmer puts forth as argument that the grave-finds enumerated by me contained forms of objects of later dates (the 10th century), and I cannot find any other solution than to go through all the items in my find list once again, one by one, in the light of his remarks.

1) In support of the idea that this coin belongs to the hoard from Ytternora is presented, among other things, the fact that the SHM only keeps a copy of the coin. Although I have actually seen the original, I fail to understand what this has to do with the matter in question. The Umayyad coin and the hoard were found at least 75 m, maybe more, from each other.

2) I have not expressed any opinion on the dating of the fibula, but the circumstances of the find are not correctly represented. The find from Oppala was not reported until August, 1884, by the Reverend J. W. Lundvik of Hille. The objects were enumerated under nos. 1—11 (?) (three double-shelled fibulae etc.; no. 8 is the Kufic coin, Umayyad year 114=732/733); no other coin is mentioned in the first find inventory. In a later inventory in a different handwriting the objects are enumerated under nos. 1—14, and no. 14 is fragments of an Anglo-Saxon silver coin. No such coin is mentioned at all in the first inventory.

3) Grave 1010 in Birka is dismissed briefly as "ninth century". Arbman himself considered this grave (together with grave 29, see below) to be one of the oldest in Birka (but I do not have it in writing), and that there was nothing to contradict its dating to the 8th century. The comb is early, but, as already mentioned, in this context I want to express my opinion only about the coin.

4) Grave 29 in Birka contained, to all appearances, several burials, at least two, but both of them early. It also contained a copper styca for Ethelred II of Northumbria (841—848/849), but this late coin was under a stone in the turf above the grave proper.

5) Birka cremation grave 197. The dating of the fibula late 8th century?

6) Birka grave 550, inhumation grave, the Umayyad dirham can in this connection be considered to be without value for the dating.

7) Birka grave 731, the grave contained several burials, and I have presumed that the Umayyad coin of the year 105 belongs to the oldest.

8—15) from Birka are dismissed briefly: "these finds lack chronologically relevant

context". However, nos. 11—15 of them come from the still proceeding excavations of the old harbour at Birka which has, more and more unmistakably, every sign of deriving its origin from the early 8th century. (Can be confirmed by Arrhenius, Ambrosiani, and others.)

16) Skopinntull. I find it difficult to believe that S-1 can be dated up to the 10th century. Apparently there were also in this case several burials in spite of the dating by Rydh, p. 198: "the end of the 9th century or up to the 10th".

17—18) The finds from Helgö comprise the period from the 7th to the 10th centuries. To all appearances Helgö is contemporary with or possibly a forerunner of Birka, and the allegation that the Helgö finds lack stratigraphy does at any rate not apply just in the matter of the coin finds.

19—20) Skuttunge parish, Grävsta. In mound 6 from this findspot there were also 0+1 ^cAbbāsīd from the year 791/792, Khalaf in Tudgha (African mint), whereas mound 7=the cremation grave and cairn 24, respectively, contained Umayyad coins from 740 and Arab-Sassānid coins from 682/683. A burial ground should not be dated after its latest coin, when it has obviously been used for several generations.

21) Upland, Stavby parish, Jönninge, grave 1 b, cremation burial, contained the Umayyad from 742/748. The ^cAbbāsīd dirham mentioned in the grave inventory was struck for Al-Ma'mūn as heir apparent in the year 190=805/806, thus not in 900 as it says in Tillväxten. According to the report by Per Lundström, however, it was found in an outer layer, marked as grave 20, and may have belonged to a later burial. Thus no unambiguous evidence.

22) Låsta no. 1, Strängnäs, excavated by Hilkka Andersson in 1962. In grave 9, cremation burial, there was the Sassānid from 628—630 listed by me. In grave 2=a mound with a cairn, there were among other things 1 Abbāsīd coin struck for Harun in Ma'dīn Al-Shash from 193 (808/809) and 1 Abbāsīd coin from 182 (798/799). Also here it is thus a matter of several graves.

23) Cremation burial from Södra Vi, Skärstad, Småland. The grave with its Umayyad coin and other contents was described at length in Iduna X 1824, which was then registered by Tornberg. The coin was then, as it is now, in the Uppsala University Collection. I do not know the reason why Callmer identifies it with certain objects kept in the SHM, but the matter should be clearly proved and verified.

24) from Bonderup is only a stray-find. The only definitely dateable one is the Umayyad coin. One can only speculate on the time *when* it was affixed to the silver armlet, but I did not wish to exclude it since it is the only stray-find of an Umayyad coin in Skåne with an established find spot.

25—26) The cremation burial-find from Öland of Umayyad dirhams provide, in my opinion, a clear indication of the first influx of Arabic coins into Öland.

27) Umayyad, possibly grave-find from Åland, was included on the weight of Beatrice Granberg's authority (p. 155 no. 1345). She listed it as a stray-find, however.

Bolin wrote a great unpublished work on Viking Age coin hoards (*Studier över mynt och myntfynd i östra och norra Europa*), it is true, but it is mainly a collection of material, and the conclusions he drew from it are based upon the material and findings of other researchers. No one can dispute his knowledge of the Russian and East European material, a knowledge he had thanks to the faithful co-operation of his wife, who knew Russian. On the other hand, neither Bolin nor his wife could read Arabic coins themselves. It was in fact the present writer, who was asked to date those Gotlandic hoards which contained mere Oriental coins and to state oldest and latest (Oriental) coin in respective hoard — this as a commission for Professor Bolin as well as for (the later Professor) Stenberger, when he prepared his great publication "*Die Schatzfunde Gotlands der Wikingerzeit*". Bolin can thus not be placed side by side with Vasmer. (I prefer to spell Richard Vasmer's name as he wrote it himself, and that was not "Fasmer", although it may look like that in Russian.)

Vasmer is placed side by side with V. L. Janin, but he cannot read Arab coins himself either. (Out of Vasmer's production Callmer does not mention the from Swedish viewpoints perhaps most interesting part: "Ein im Dorfe Staryi Dedin in Weissrussland gemachter Fund kufischer Münzen". KVHAA Handl. XL, 2, Stockholm 1929. This is the most thoroughly worked out scientific publication of a Russian coin find in modern times and has formed the basis of Spassky's theories.) Also Janin has to rely upon his wife, the knowledgeable S. A. Janina who, however, has not published a great deal herself but who collects the material for her husband's lectures. At least as prominent as Janin (and more modern) is, in my opinion, I. G. Spassky, who then became head of the coin collection of the Hermitage in Leningrad and has published a valuable book on the Russian monetary system, which also appeared in a polished English translation in 1967 (*The Russian Monetary System*, Amsterdam 1967). However, he is not an Orientalist either; a Russian Orientalist and numismatist who should not be overlooked in this connection is A. A. Bykov. He was the first Russian numismatist who was allowed to travel abroad after World War II; he then visited Sweden in the 1960's, and not only Stockholm but also Uppsala and Lund. He has kept up active relations with the Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals since then.

In his *The Russian Monetary System*, I. G. Spassky writes (English translation Amsterdam 1967, p. 46): "A few specimens of the silverdrachm of the Sassanian kings of Iran, in the 4th and 7th centuries have managed to accompany cufic coins and have thus reached Russia. The obverse shows the bust of a bearded king in a splendid garland, on the reverse is a fire-altar. For Eastern Europe and Ancient Russia they appear to be monuments of the cufic period. But in a limited area in the North-East, on the Kama-river near the Urals, these coins are a fairly common occurrence among the hoards; finds of earlier periods are also noted there. They must have come there straight from Persia

before the cufic coin influx began. After a gradual arrival at Bólgar, and a certain delay there, the main bulk of the coins joined the dirhems on their way to Russia."

Spassky is apparently on the same line as the present writer and his opinions are founded on Europe's beyond comparison greatest material of Oriental coin-hoards.

By way of conclusion I would like, with some repetitions of my views in the paper attacked by Callmer, to point out the obvious fact that the Viking Age is Sweden's most international period before the charter travels to the Mediterranean countries in the late 20th century. The beginning of the Viking Age must for our part be marked by the appearance of Oriental coins in the Scandinavian area — in the east. In the west, the beginning of the Viking Age is generally dated to the year 793, when the monastery at Lindisfarne was ravaged. In the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle there are reported attacks in Wessex already in 787, but the year 793 is the first year appearing in a chronicle with a reliable statement of locality, and most Viking Age historians and archaeologists depart from this year — it has become the Archimedes' fixed point in Viking Age archaeology. But please note that this year is applicable only to the western world of culture — in the east the Viking Age begins at least 50 years earlier, at any rate before 750. Here we have to rely upon the evidence of the Oriental coins. But even in the matter of Western Scandinavia, I cannot agree with Callmer's statement, p. 175: "It is difficult to decide whether the Oriental coins actually antedate the Western coins in Western and Southern Scandinavia." The fact remains that there is no western Viking Age coins find of older date than any of the Oriental ones.

Finally a correction of Callmer's comments on the find from Stavby parish, Jönninge, Uppland: the dirham in question from Ma^cdin Al-Shāsh is struck for Al-Ma'mūn as heir apparent. The year should be A. H. 190 = 805/906 A. D. This coin was in grave 2 according to the grave inventory whereas, according to the same source, the Umayyad

dirham was in grave 1 B=USW find no. 1. The information in Tillväxten 1954, p. 45, is thus erroneous.

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Sammanfattning

Författaren betonar att hon använt mynt och och icke föremålsformer som dateringsmedel, och att hon som numismatiker alltid räknar med ett terminus post quem för en nedlagd myntskatt, dvs. den kan inte vara nedlagd före dateringen av dess yngsta mynt.

Orientaliska mynt, importerade under vikingatiden finns från alla svenska landskap, men talrikast från Gotland. Men när de tidi-

gaste gravfynden och lösfynden prickades in visade sig en klar tendens, nämligen att orientaliska fynd, daterbara före 700 respektive 725 koncentrerar sig till Mälardalen med början i Adelsö-Ekerö-området och senare utbredning uppåt i Uppland och söderut i Småland; Öland och Sydsverige kommer efter 725 och Gotland efter 750.

Författaren bemöter, punkt för punkt, Callmers kritik av framställningen i Fornvännen 1974 och påpekar att även om 793 kan gälla som början för vikingatiden i den västliga kulturvärlden, ger de orientaliska myntens vittnesbörd en början i öster före 750. Avslutningsvis framhålls att det inte finns något västligt myntfynd av tidigare datum än något av de orientaliska.