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## THE COINS OF THE KUOLAJÄRVI (SALLA) HOARD

### *Abstract*

The 1839 Kuolajärvi hoard, dating from the beginning of the 12th century, included both coins and silver ornaments together with a balance and a set of weights. The composition of the coin material can be seen to reflect imports from Karelia and Russia as well as from Scandinavia.

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The Kuolajärvi hoard from the province of Lapland is the most northern of Finnish coin finds of Viking-Age type and, together with the Swedish offering-place finds and a few finds from the Norwegian coast, one of the most northern in the whole of Fennoscandia. It is also the latest Finnish coin hoard from the period, with a *terminus post quem* of 1110.

Published by Nordman and Salmo,<sup>1</sup> the contents of the find have long been known. During the last thirty years, however, the literature on nordic coin finds has greatly increased, and it is now possible better than before to compare the Kuolajärvi hoard with the material from neighbouring areas and thus to give a background for it.

Found in 1839 by a peasant's son on the mountain of Aatservainen, to the west of Lake Tennönjärvi and some 60 kilometres north of the Polar Circle, the hoard was concealed under the corner of a big stone in a birchbark basket. There were at least 174 coins and a number of other objects, including silver ornaments and a balance with twelve weights. A civil servant who happened to visit the neighbourhood bought the hoard from the finder and conveyed it to the University of Helsinki. According to his own words, he wanted to save it from 'such fate as befalls the other hoards from ancient times, often found in Lapland and even of considerable value, which the itinerant Russian fur traders

usually buy from Finnish settlers for half the price of silver'.<sup>2</sup>

In more recent literature the find is called the Salla hoard, for the parish of Kuolajärvi changed its name in 1936. However, when in the Peace of Moscow a part of the parish was ceded to the USSR, the name Kuolajärvi was readopted for this district. Since the find place lies to the east of the border, there is no reason for not calling the find by its old name again.

The hoard came to the university collection (now in the National Museum) in 1841. Already in the same year Professor G.G. Hällström read a paper on the weights included in it for the Finnish Society of Science, and in connection with this paper he also presented a summary listing of the coins, prepared by Professor J.G. Linsén, keeper of the university's numismatic collection.<sup>3</sup> Linsén personally knew very little of medieval coins, and the fact that the original list (see below) is written in German makes it clear that he had been assisted by some foreign scholar or, more likely, an amateur. The list includes 75 'Anglo-Saxon' coins struck under several reigns from Egberht to Henry II. As early as 1846 B.E. Hildebrand, in the first edition of *Anglosachsiska mynt* (p. LXXII), pointed out that such a composition was extremely unlikely, and he surmised – quite correctly as will be seen – that many of the coins were Frisian and German rather than English.

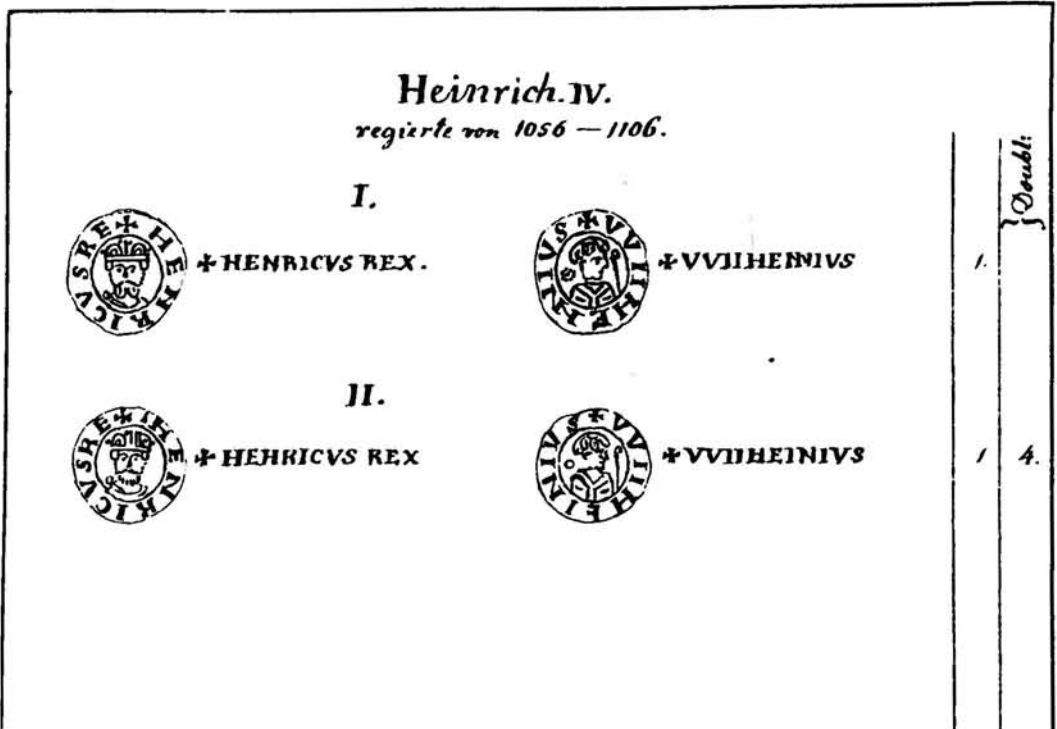


Fig. I. Frisian coins from the Kuolajärvi hoard (Groningen, Heinrich IV and Bishop Wilhelm de Ponte, 1074–76). From a manuscript catalogue from the 1840s in the University of Helsinki collection, now in the National Museum of Finland.

Writing in 1900 on the coin finds of Finland, Wilhelm Lagus, while willing to give credence to Hildebrand's remarks, noted that the problem could no longer be solved with certainty because before 1850 it had not been customary in the university collection to keep the finds separate.<sup>4</sup> What he had not realized was that in certain illustrated lists of Viking-Age coins which belong to the collection the Kuolajärvi coins (or some of them) are indicated with the word *neu* or *zugekommen*. The meaning of these lists, Lagus said, was a mystery to him.<sup>5</sup> There is no doubt, however, that their compiler, perhaps a German from Russia or the Baltic provinces, was the same man who helped Linsén to identify the coins.<sup>6</sup>

By comparing the illustrated lists with Hällström's publication and the actual coins in the collection we may note that the Kuolajärvi coins, besides being mostly from the late eleventh century, have a characteristic although not very distinctive dark tone. The other coins in the university's pre-1850 collection are mainly from the 1835 Raisio hoard, probably concealed in the 1030s, and they have a different

appearance.<sup>7</sup> With the help of these factors the reconstruction of the Kuolajärvi hoard was carried out by Otto Alcenius in the beginning of this century.<sup>8</sup> The reconstruction could not be one hundred per cent accurate, but its basic reliability is not in doubt. Alcenius's similar reconstruction of the Raisio hoard was, on the other hand, somewhat less successful.<sup>9</sup> Various attempts have also been made to identify the silver ornaments in the two hoards.<sup>10</sup>

Alcenius's arrangement of the German coins from Kuolajärvi, as published by Salmo, includes 163 pieces.<sup>11</sup> With certain minor corrections<sup>12</sup> we get the figure 166. To this must be added seven Anglo-Saxon and probably one or two Anglo-Norman coins.<sup>13</sup> These already would make up the above-mentioned total of 174. However, it seems likely that also some of the unprovenanced Danish coins of Magnus the Good and Sven Estridsen in the university collection (some of them cleaned and thus without patina) may have belonged to the find.<sup>14</sup> A Norwegian penny<sup>15</sup> assigned by Alcenius to Raisio perhaps also comes from Kuolajärvi, to judge both from its date and its patination. Thus

it is very possible that a few of the 166 German coins derive from other finds.

On the other hand we do not know if the figure 174, which is more or less mechanically repeated in all the early documents relating to the find, is really accurate. It is possible that it only includes whole coins, for there are in the collection several unprovenanced fragments of late eleventh-century German coins which have the same appearance as those from Kuolajärvi.<sup>16</sup> In the following summary the German component is identical with the material published by Salmo, with the exception of the above-mentioned amendments.<sup>17</sup>

*List of coins (Alcenius's reconstruction)*

Germany	
Oberlothringen	
Verdun, Theoderich (1046-89)	1
Metz, Herman (1073-90)	1
Marsal	2
Koblenz, Egilbert (1079-1101)	1
Andernach, Pilgrim (1021-36)	1
Niederlothringen	
Maastricht, Heinrich IV (1056-1105)	1
Episcopal	1
Cologne, Otto III (996-1002)	1
Heinrich II (1002-14)	1
Anno (1056-75)	1
Sigwin (1079-89)	1
Hermann III (1089-99)	1
Friedrich (1100-31)	1
Uncertain	1
Utrecht, Heinrich II (1002-24)	1
Wilhelm (1054-76)	5
Konrad (1076-99)	3
Deventer, Konrad (1076-99)	1
Uncertain	1
Groningen, Wilhelm (1054-76)	9
Friesland, Bruno III (1038-57)	6
Egbert I (1057-68)	3
Egbert II (1068-90)	32
Emden, Hermann (c. 1020-51)	10
Leer, Gottfried II (before 1057)	1
Jever, Ordulf (1059-71)	3
Hermann (1059-86)	2
Sachsen	
Dortmund, Heinrich IV (1056-1105)	5
Stade, Udo (1034-57)	1
Hildesheim, Gothard (1022-38)	1
Goslar, Heinrich III (1039-46)	1
Heinrich IV (1056-1105)	12
Hermann (1081-88)	1
Heinrich V (1106-25)	23
Gittelde, Dietrich II (1056-85)	3
Dietrich III (1085-1106)?	1
Dietrich II or III	1
Uncertain	1
Reinhausen, Reinhard (1106-23)	2
Bursfelde, Heinrich IV (1056-1105)	1
Magdeburg, without name	1
Hartwig (1085-7/1079-1102)	1
Adelgot (1107-19)	1
Quedlingburg, Agnes (1110-25)	1
Erfurt, Lubold (1051-59)	5
Naumburg, episcopal	1

Franken	
Hersfeld, uncertain	1
Bamberg, episcopal	2
Mainz, Heinrich V (1106-25)	1
Speyer, Marienpfennig	1
Heinrich III (1039-56)	3
Bayern	
Regensburg, Heinrich IV (1002-4)	1
Uncertain mints	2
England	
Aethelred II (978-1016)	1
Cnut (1016-35)	6
William I (1066-87)	1 or 2?
Norway	1?
Denmark	?

The most remarkable feature of the hoard is the preponderance of Frisian coins (i.e. those from the mints of Utrecht, Deventer, Groningen, Emden, Leer, Jever, as well as those struck by the counts of Frisia) which constitute 46 per cent of the German component. Likewise notable is the high percentage (23) of the coins of Goslar. The Goslar coins, which include 23 struck for Henry V (1106-23), also form the latest single group in the hoard, although there are two individual coins which may be later: a Quedlingburg penny of Abbess Agnes (1110-25) which gives the hoard its *terminus post quem*, and a Cologne penny of Archbishop Friedrich (1100-31).

A comparison with the Swedish finds shows both differences and common features. The material published by Gert Hatz includes no fewer than five major Swedish hoards with a *t.p.q.* falling between 1100 and 1111 (unprovenanced hoards excepted)<sup>18</sup> Four of the hoards are from Gotland and one from Öland. In all five the coins of Cologne (with neighbouring minor mints) and Goslar form the largest single groups. In two of the hoards as much as 28 per cent of the German component comes from Cologne, the average for the five being 18 per cent. The contingent of Goslar varies between 8 and 23 per cent, averaging 16. The proportion of Frisian coins is generally smaller, reaching 16 per cent in only one hoard; the average is 10 per cent.

The offering-place finds from North Sweden present a very different picture. In the Rautasjaure material, where the latest of the 111 German coins is a Goslar penny of Henry V, the issues of Cologne form only 5 per cent of them, and there are no other Goslar coins than the one already mentioned. The Frisian coins, in the other hand, amount to 34 per cent. The largest group of coins beside the German are the Norwegian late eleventh-century pennies struck of inferior silver (90 specimens).<sup>19</sup>

Because of ancient connections between Lapland and Karelia it is natural to compare the Kuolajärvi find also with the hoards from Karelia and North Russia, many of which are known to have a very high percentage of Frisian coins, surpassing 75 per cent in at least seven cases.<sup>20</sup> The *t.p.q.* of such hoards is usually 1068, the accession date of Count Egbert II (1068–90) of Frisia. Only two hoards of this type seem to belong later than 1100, those of Shpan'kovo in Ingria (c. 1850 coins)<sup>21</sup> and Skadino near Pskov (839 coins).<sup>22</sup> The nominal *t.p.q.* for both finds is 1111, but in both cases coins of a somewhat later date seem also to be present.<sup>23</sup> In the Shpan'kovo hoard the number of coins from Cologne and the neighbouring minor mints is 23 (1.3 per cent), in Skadino as high as 74 (8.8 per cent). The corresponding figures for Goslar are 1 (0.05 per cent) and 31 (3.9 per cent). Despite these marked differences both finds have clearly fewer coins of Cologne and Goslar than the Swedish hoards. The Frisian component is higher, in Shpan'kovo 24 and Skadino 40 per cent. It is important to note, however, that while in Sweden the import of Frisian coin continued until the very end of the eleventh century, in Russia finds of Frisian coins with a *t.p.q.* 1076 or later are exceptional.<sup>24</sup>

These observations can perhaps be summed up as follows. The proportion of Frisian coins in the Kuolajärvi hoard is much higher than in Swedish hoards and points to an import through Karelia from North Russia, where Frisian coins and especially those of Egbert II account for more than half of the German element in late eleventh-century hoards. However, among the ten thousand Frisian coins known from Russia there are no more than some twenty pennies of Bishop Conrad (1076–99) and his successors.<sup>25</sup> In the Kuolajärvi find there are 4 such coins, and as they are not rare in Sweden (over 200 specimens<sup>26</sup>) it seems very plausible that the latter Frisian coins, as well as those from Goslar and the German coins of the period around 1100 in general, reached Kuolajärvi through Gotland and Scandinavia rather than through Russia and Karelia.

Most of the Frisian coins in the offering-place finds, on the other hand, are likely to have come through Karelia, for their relative numbers in these finds are higher than in South Sweden and the post-1076 coins are lacking. A North-Finnish hoard from Kuusamo with a *t.p.q.* of 1054 included 107 Frisian coins (27 per cent) among its 396 German coins.<sup>27</sup> Together with the Kuolajärvi hoard this find can be seen as evidence of

the eastern import of Frisian coins to Lapland, an import which increased with the great influx of coins of Egbert II to Russia. This influx appears to have ebbed already by 1080. The composition of the Kuolajärvi hoard probably reflects a situation around the year 1100 when the import of coins to the extreme north from Russia was being replaced with imports from Scandinavia.

## REFERENCES

- <sup>1)</sup> C.A. Nordman, *Anglo-Saxon Coins Found in Finland*, Helsingfors 1921, 19–20; Helmer Salmo, *Deutsche Münzen in vorgeschichtlichen Funden Finnlands*, SMYA 47, Helsinki 1948, 37–9.
- <sup>2)</sup> Christina Bäcksbacka, *Föremålsbeståndet i 1000-talets finska myntförande skattfynd*, Helsingin yliopiston arkeologian laitoksen moniste n:o 11, Helsingfors 1975, 37–41.
- <sup>3)</sup> Gust. Gabr. Hällström, 'Undersökning om ett i finska Lappmarken gjordt fynd af gamla vigter och mynt, m.m.', *Acta Societatis Scientiarum Fennicae* 1 (1842), 731–40, at 731–2.
- <sup>4)</sup> Wilh. Lagus, *Om mynt funna i finsk jord* (Numismatiska anteckningar II), Helsingfors 1900, 81–7, at 84–5.
- <sup>5)</sup> Wilh. Lagus, *Historik öfver Finska Universitetets Mynt- och Medaljkabinett I* (Numismatiska anteckningar I:1), Helsingfors 1885, 97, n. 61. Cf. Lagus 1900, 74.
- <sup>6)</sup> T. Talvio, *Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles* 25 (The National museum, Helsinki), London 1978, xviii–xix.
- <sup>7)</sup> Talvio 1978, xxxi; idem, 'Skattfynden från Janakkala (1832), Reso (1835) och Kuolajärvi (1839)', *Finskt Museum* 1979 (1981), 33–45, at 37–8.
- <sup>8)</sup> Talvio 1978, xx.
- <sup>9)</sup> Talvio 1981, 38.
- <sup>10)</sup> See Bäcksbacka 1975, 27–69; Talvio 1981.
- <sup>11)</sup> Salmo 1948, 436–46 (summary of the material); cf. Nordman 1921, 20.
- <sup>12)</sup> Six coins published by Salmo as belonging to other finds can be shown to come from Kuolajärvi (Salmo 1948, nos. 24:132 and 135, 69:66–69), while three coins assigned to Kuolajärvi probably derive from the 1832 Rautu hoard (Salmo 1948, nos. 34:26, 74:48, 77:98; see T. Talvio, 'Entisen Suomen Karjalan esihistorialliset rahalöydöt', *Suomen Museo* 1979, 7–10).
- <sup>13)</sup> Talvio 1978, xxxi–ii. According to this publication there were probably two coins of William I in the find, but their provenances are in fact very uncertain.
- <sup>14)</sup> Salmo, in 'Suomesta löydetty tanskalaiset 1000-luvun rahat', *Suomen Museo* 1933 (1934), 22–43, publishes nine coins as belonging either certainly or possibly to the Kuolajärvi find, but here again the provenances are quite uncertain.
- <sup>15)</sup> See Kolbjørn Skaare, *Coins and Coinage in Viking-Age Norway*, Oslo 1976, 186, find no. 217.
- <sup>16)</sup> Salmo 1948, nos. 35:525–6, 53:24, 64:43. Also two whole coins, published as from unknown finds, have the same patina as the Kuolajärvi coins (86:14, 87:47).

- <sup>17)</sup> See note 12 above.
- <sup>18)</sup> G. Hatz, *Handel und Verkehr zwischen dem Deutschen Reich und Schweden in der späten Wikingerzeit*, Lund 1974, nos. 359–61, 363, 370.
- <sup>19)</sup> Hatz 174, no. 362.
- <sup>20)</sup> V.M. Potin, 'Topografia nakhobok zapadnoevropeiskikh monet X–XIII vv. na territorii Drevnei Rusi', *Trudy Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha* 9 (Numizmatika 3), Leningrad 1967, nos. 159, 172, 185, 206, 217, 254, 335. The finds of Frisian coins from Northern Russia and Scandinavia will be discussed in a forthcoming paper by T. Talvio.
- <sup>21)</sup> Potin 1967, no. 189.
- <sup>22)</sup> Potin 1967, no. 170.
- <sup>23)</sup> The Shpan'kovo hoard includes three specimens of Dbg. 1831 which is now dated to 1125 or later; the Skadino hoard is said to include a German or Danish bracteate. (See notes 20–22 above.)
- <sup>24)</sup> The material presented by Potin (1967, nos. 170, 189, 218) includes 18 Frisian coins with a t.p.q. later than 1076.
- <sup>25)</sup> See previous note.
- <sup>26)</sup> The material presented by Hatz (1974) includes 45 hoards which belong later than 1076, with a total of 220 Frisian coins certainly struck after that year.
- <sup>27)</sup> Salmo 1948, 36–7; Talvio 1978, xxix.