

## Why the king needed his own goldsmith

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The paper gives a summary of the ongoing project to discern the function of royal goldsmiths in Svealand. The general prerequisites of royal goldsmiths are discussed and the importance of the goldsmith's role in non-monetary societies underlined. Garnet jewellery in general seems to belong to the gifts given at royal level and it is suggested that the similarities between the garnet cloisonné of Svealand and Gotland emerges from the work having been produced in a Svea royal workshop organisation. On Gotland these products are only found in the early Vendel period whereas later the garnet cloisonné use another type of cement otherwise found in Denmark.

The close relations between Svealand and Gotland also found on a type of small equal armed brooch, made of bronze, frequently found in Svealand but also occurring on Gotland. A detailed study revealed that the Gotlandic brooches may have been produced in Svealand. Jewellery made of gilded bronze (instead of using silver as on the continent) is a typical Scandinavian trait found into late Viking age. It might be that the persistent use of bronze alloys is due to the fact that bronze was considered a regal metal.

In the documents and sagas from early medieval times we read about royal goldsmiths. Often this role was combined with that of keeper royal treasure as we learn from *Vita Eligii* (Krusch 1902). Eligius is the goldsmith of whom we know most in the early medieval period. He started as an apprentice in Limoges and established a goldsmith's workshop at the monastery at Solinac not far from Limoges. He later moved his workshop to Paris, at the summons of King Dagobert, to work directly for the King. The documents name the master of the Dagobert's mint as *Eligius Monetarius*, and it is believed that we here have the same Eligius in a new role (cf. Lafaurie 1977). In 641 Eligius became Bishop of Noyon. While this elevation prompted the chroniclers to record his life it did not quite mark the termination of his career as a goldsmith. According to the *Vita Eligii* he moved his workshop to Noyon and later took part in the decoration of the Cathedral of St Denis and the saint's tombs in the churches of Tournai and Beauvais. The *Vita Eligii* confirms that a goldsmith could be very mobile. Vierck who has studied the artifacts probably related to Eligius showed how his production is spread not only in Dagobert's kingdom but also over other parts of the merovingian Realm (cf. Vierck 1974, Abb. 19).

What, then, was the purpose the king having a goldsmith? That a merovingian king needed a master of coin is natural, considering that the economy was monetary. However, in Eligius' case the role of royal gold-

smith also had an important ceremonial function: the decorations in St. Denis and on the saint's tombs were probably carried out as gifts to the church from the king. Gifts and tributes were still an important element in the royal economies of early medieval times and probably formed a large part of any ruler's royal treasure (cf. Claude 1973).

It is this role of the royal goldsmith, namely as a functionary in a formalized tradition of gift giving, which is of special interest in a Swedish context. For the kings in middle Sweden the purpose of a goldsmith was not to act as a master of coin, as the monetary economy did not exist before the Viking Period (cf. Malmer 1990). However this fact would make it still more important for a king or leader to have a goldsmith, as one way to pay his men would be in gifts of jewellery. Of course the most important "paying" was that the king's men lived in the king's residence having food and clothes from the king's household. But any extra service most certainly had to be rewarded with more substantial goods.

For archaeology the regional characteristics of certain items can be useful in revealing this type of gift policy. In this respect the regional distribution of different types of neck-rings of silver evidenced by Hårdh (Hårdh 1996) is remarkable. Especially one can note the high frequency of one type of neck-ring in western Norway, (Hårdh 1996, fig. 19). While Hårdh explained this as reflecting a strong localized craft tradition I be-

lieve it might equally be an example of a politically centralized power (in this case the Vestfold dynasty) being maintained through a gift diplomacy. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that the distribution of the neck-rings is quite different in this case from the distribution of so called "hacksilver" e.g. small mutilated pieces of silver, which I think Hårdh is right when she interprets as tradematerial.

To use jewellery as diplomatic gifts is a tradition going back to the Roman administration and the *Dona militaria* of the first centuries AD. The most well known examples from late Roman times are the heavy Roman fibulae with onion-shaped terminals, which were given to the Roman consuls but also to Germanic generals such as the Frankish king Childeric. Childeric is portrayed on his seal wearing this type of brooch on a *chlamys* (cloak). Since the *chlamys* was not a traditional garment among the Germanic tribes it is likely that fibula and *chlamys* were given together as one unit, a possibility made all the more likely by the fact that the fibula had a screw-lock, (cf. Arrhenius 1990) fixing it to the dress material and is to that extent integral to the garment.

These fibulae may have originated as a mark of Roman civil service rank, however, when Childeric received the brooch it must have become a more prestigious symbol. A similar change of status over time is apparent for the arm- and neck-rings known originally as *Dona militaria* in the Roman army. The official use of *Dona militaria* seems to have stopped at the end of the third century (cf. Maxfield 1981:248). Thereafter *Dona militaria* seem to have been used in a less official but more personal way, for example the Roman generals could give arm-rings or neck-rings as marks of personal appreciation rather than as representatives of the Roman state. Maxfield (1981) gives this explanation for the story Procopius told of the Byzantine general Belisarius giving rings to his men.

Most probably the fibula was a gift to Childeric of the same kind as the rings given by Belisarius. If that was the case the donor would be the Roman general Aegidius whom Childeric helped in a battle against other Germanic tribes after the murder of Maijoranus (cf. James 1988:67). It also seems likely that the splendid weaponry and horse harness which was found in the grave of Childeric were originally gifts from the same source, for they are all adorned with garnet cloisonné of Byzantine quality (cf. Arrhenius 1985:106ff). Further, many garnet panels of similar quality have been found in less distinguished graves in the Frankish area. Unlike those on Childeric's equipment they are mounted locally but may form part of the same tribute nevertheless (cf. Arrhenius 1998), representing its secondary distribution from Childeric to his men.

The status of garnet jewellery in the process of royal gift giving seems to have been generally accepted among the Germanic peoples during the Migration Period and

is probably the reason that Germanic cloisonné jewellery started to be made. This began by local craftsmen mounting imported garnet panels, but at the turn of the sixth century also led to the production of cut garnets, (cf. Arrhenius 1985:127ff). The Franks used garnet jewellery as gifts to kingdoms in the north (cf. Arrhenius 1985:197) Because of this the distribution of garnet jewellery may allow us to trace much larger political structures.

Garnet jewellery was also produced in Svealand, however, based on imported cut garnets. Of special interest in this connection are the occurrence of small, domed garnets cut as cabochons with a diameter of 5mm and a height of 3mm. These cabochon garnets are found on Frankish as well as on Anglosaxon and Longobardic garnet cloisonné and they seem to have been produced both in the Pannonian area and by the Franks, (cf. Arrhenius 1985:52f). In Scandinavia they have a very limited occurrence and in Middle Sweden they only occur together with other garnets of Frankish origin which gives the impression that these garnets derive from import (or gifts) from the Frankish area. In Svealand, especially in Vendelgrav XII at Vendel, they occur together with a cement consisting of a mixture of calcite and wachs. This kind of cement is also found together with these cabochon garnets on so called "button on bow brooches" from Svealand and Gotland belonging to periods VII:1 and early VII:2. Further in both cases these elements are combined with early examples of Salin's style II, where animal heads with a long beak, (often curved) either hang alone or are intertwined in a rhythmic interlace. A splendid example of this interlace is found in the west mound in old Uppsala. It is carved in bone and probably forms part of a collar belonging to a sceptre, (cf. Arrhenius 1995, 325).

The similarity between Svealand and Gotland in connection with these examples of goldsmith's art is striking. Indeed, it may be that we have here traces of a royal goldsmith's workshop and that the occurrence of this jewellery on Gotland marks an expansion of the Svea kingdom. It should however be remarked that already in next period VII:3 Gotlandic cloisonné begins to use a cement of wachs and sand also found on Bornholm (Lousgård grave 35) and that we may here have traces of an expansion by the Danes. These hypotheses are an important part in the ongoing research project to discern the status of goldsmiths in Svealand and to understand whether these goldsmiths worked directly on commission from a royalty.

A detailed study of the stamps used on small equal armed bronze brooches from Svealand and Gotland belonging to early Vendel Period (VII:1) (Wårhem 1997) reveals that some of the brooches found on Gotland may have been made in Svealand. If the stylistic connections between Svealand and Gotland do represent an extension of the Svea power to the island, the more simple bronze brooches may indicate that the royal Svea

workshops were also producing more simple artifacts. Perhaps the royalty had a monopoly of casting metals?

In fact, the characteristic dominance of gilded bronze work in Scandinavian jewellery art from the Migration Period right through the Viking Age may also be evidence of such royal workshops at work. All the signs suggest that silver work should have taken over, as this was favoured in continental Europe and there was abundant silver available to the Vikings in Scandinavia. Their continued use of bronze metal, for example in the casting of tortoise brooches may be the result of tradition effecting a continuing royal workshop organization. In that context bronze may have been considered a "regal" metal.

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