

# SMALL THINGS WIDE HORIZONS

STUDIES IN HONOUR OF  
BIRGITTA HÅRDH

Edited by

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## Preface

The 16th of August 2015 is Professor Birgitta Hårdh's 70th birthday. At the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History in Lund, an editorial group was set up for the publication of a Festschrift in her honour.

For several decades Birgitta has been an important staff member and researcher at the Department. Her doctoral dissertation was based on Viking Age silver deposits in southernmost Sweden. This is a field that she later developed in several national and international publications. As a result she is regarded as one of the leading experts on the Northern European Viking Age, engaged in diverse research projects both in Sweden and internationally, and she is a vital collaborator in various networks specializing in the Viking Age.

Through time, Birgitta has extended her research to comprise other periods in the Iron Age. This is particularly clear in her research on the major site of Uppåkra outside Lund. Here she has devoted articles to a detailed treatment of the finds from the Late Iron Age. She has also edited several of the volumes in the series Uppåkrastudier, with both national and international contributions.

Another special field examined by Birgitta Hårdh is the megalithic graves in south-west Scania. Both find material from individual sites and broader perspectives on the Middle Neolithic have been covered in these studies.

Besides doing research, Birgitta Hårdh has for several decades been a lecturer and professor, with long experience of teaching students and supervising doctoral candidates in the subject. She has also been director of studies and served on a number of committees in the Faculty of Arts and Theology.

A feature common to all Birgitta Hårdh's research is that she has been able, through analysis of a body of finds, to broaden the perspective, not least geographically through her profound knowledge of phenomena in Northern Europe and indeed all of Europe. This book has been given the title *Small Things – Wide Horizons*, which is a good summary of Birgitta's research hitherto.

Thanks to the large network of contacts to which Birgitta Hårdh belongs, the call for papers for this Festschrift met a great response. A total of fourty titles were submitted to the proposed volume.

Through this Festschrift we wish to thank and honour Professor Birgitta Hårdh as a fine colleague and an excellent scholar. We all look forward to coming years and many more important contributions to archaeological research.

*Lars Larsson, Fredrik Ekengren,  
Bertil Helgesson, Bengt Söderberg*





**SILVER**



# The background and the early history of the neck rings of the Glazov type (also called Permian) and the beginning of East-West connections in Early Medieval Northern Europe in the 8th and 9th centuries

Johan Callmer

## Abstract

*The intensive cultural interaction in the 8th century between the Baltic region and north-eastern Russia is sketched. The early development of the neck-rings of the Glazov type among the Eastern Finns is then shortly discussed.*

## East and West in the 8th century AD

It is a grave mistake to think that the Viking Period in the East and the West was something similar. In the East there were no rich monasteries, churches and palaces to rob and the inhabitants of the vast woodlands initially were not rich with possessions of gold and silver. The motor for the developments in the East was the fur trade and later also the slave trade. I will not go into the early history of the fur trade in Northern Europe here but it may suffice to point out that this is a phenomenon with its epicenter moving from the West towards the East from the Roman Iron Age until in the 19th century finally ending up in Alaska (!).

By the end of the 7th century AD the major production area of the fur trade was on the brink of moving east from the Scandinavian Peninsula. The trail of the fur trade into Finland is i.a. marked by the finds of dragon brooches (Cleve 1927) (Fig. 1). Another core area with another important trade link involved in the fur trade had existed on the Vjatka and Kama Rivers in Northeastern Europe for some time. Simultaneously with the developments in the Baltic Region these agents in the East extended their activities into the formerly little exploited lands of the Veps in the West and the Vanvizardino groups in the North and the Northwest (possibly a little earlier). An important turn over point was established among the Veps on the Suda (a tributary of the Seksna and then of the Volga) (Fig. 2) (Kudrjašev 2005, 2008; Makarov 1999). The situation in the first half of the 8th century is well rendered by the finds of the Nevolino belts (Fig. 3) all the way from the area of origin on the Sylva (a tributary of the Kama) (Goldina 2012) to the monumental barrow cemetery of Old Uppsala in Sweden (Ljungkvist 2013). Among scholars the Nevolino belts are sometimes mentioned as a strange phenomenon going in the wrong direction a long time before the Viking Period. In my opinion the

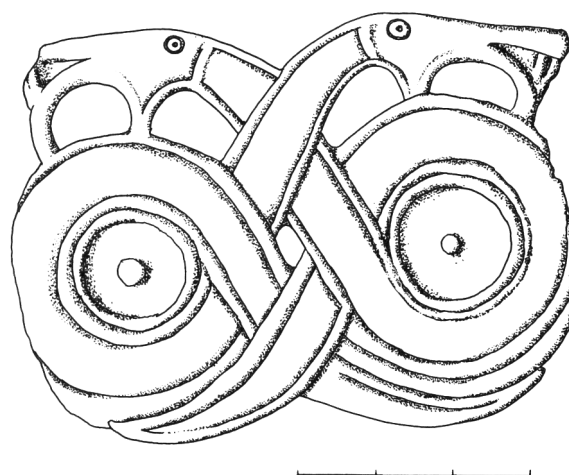


FIG. 1. DRAGON FIBULA FROM KÄRJÄMÄKI, EURA PARISH, PROV. OF Satakunta, Finland.

development has its rational explanation and the problem is rather connected with the much too early dating of the belts (7th century instead of the first half of the 8th century; Goldina 2012). The Nevolino belts have been a rather isolated group of artifacts but this is of course wrong. The chain holders with reversed horse heads, an element in the Finnish female dress produced in Finland after Eastern originals (Fig. 4) is a good example (Tallgren 1915, 15; Kivikoski 1963, 33 f.). In addition to the chain holders there are numerous other items which cannot be described here for lack of space. I would however like to stress the importance of the Eastern beads which begin to appear in the Baltic Region before AD 760 (Fig. 5) (Callmer 1990, 1996). Helgö with building groups 1 and 2 have yielded bead material from this early phase and the well known Buddha probably belongs as well. Birka has only yielded a single Early Eastern bead.

## Silver and its value

Another interesting category of Eastern finds is the Sassanian and Arabic coins found on the Helgö sites (building groups) (Hovén 1986). The whole question concerning the arrival of Eastern silver today remains unclear. Most historians have dated the incursion of

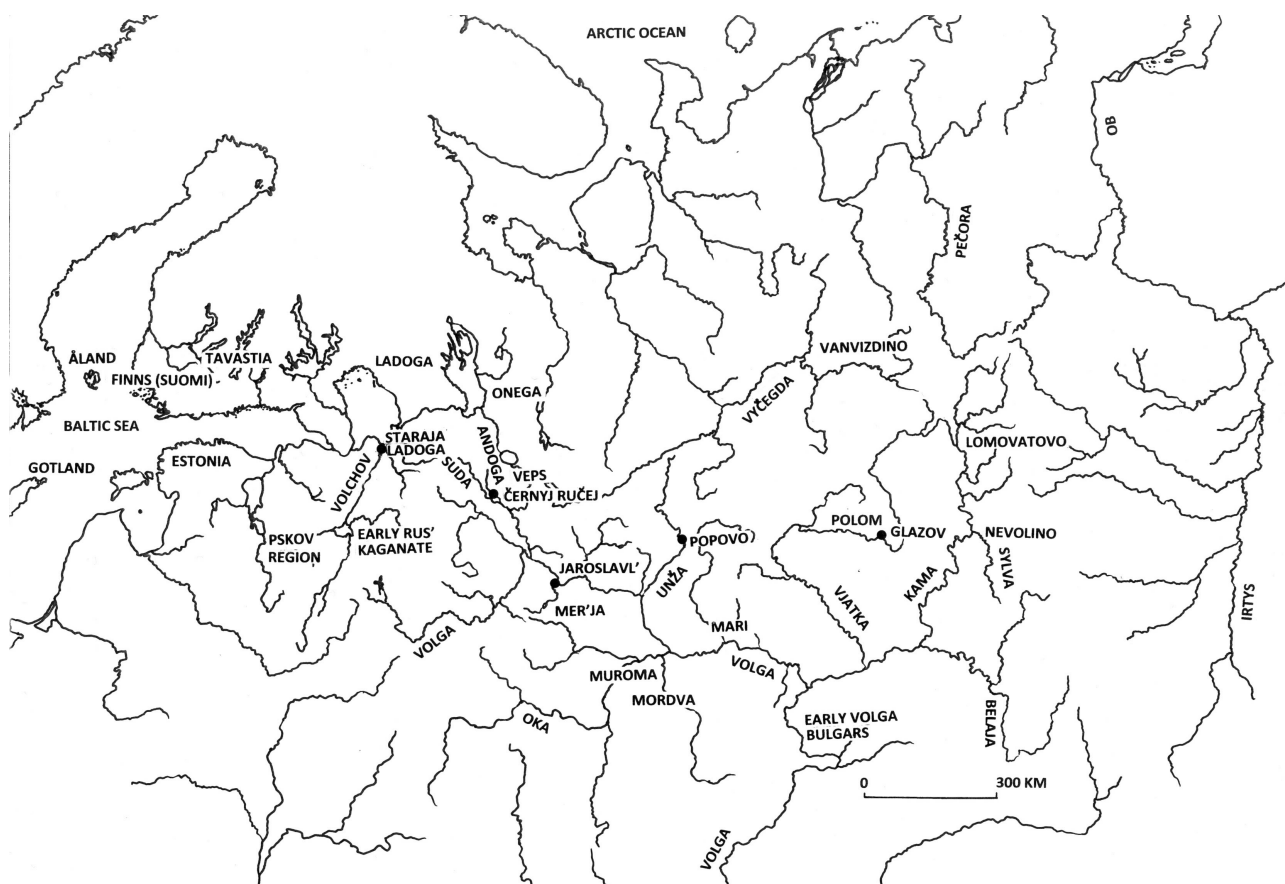


FIG. 2. ORIENTATION MAP WITH PEOPLES, ARCHAEOLOGICAL CULTURES, REGIONS, LOCALITIES, SEAS AND RIVERS REFERRED TO IN THE TEXT.

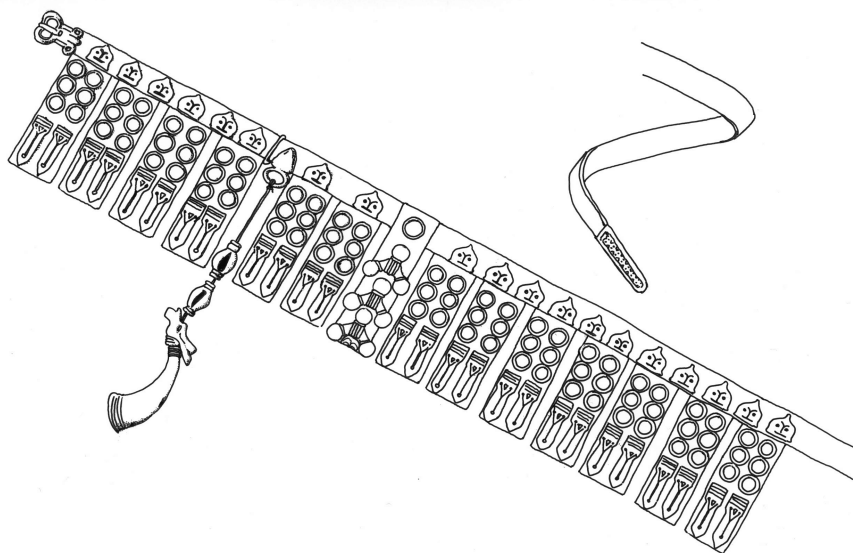


FIG. 3. BELT OF THE NEVOLINO TYPE. RECONSTRUCTION AFTER GOLDINA 2012 OF THE BELT FOUND IN GRAVE NR. 129 AT NEVOLINO.

Oriental silver coins to the Baltic Region to ca. 800. Others have even thought that with the exception of very few stray coins Oriental coins only became common in the mid 9th century. A few voices have been raised for an earlier beginning well before AD 800. The most ardent champion for this opinion was the late U.L. Welin (1974). Her point of departure was a number of Omayyad dirhams found in Swedish pagan graves. A close scrutiny of the grave complexes revealed that there was not a single grave

complex which could be dated to before AD 800. In fact several graves with early dirhams dated even to the 10th century. Later additions to the corpus of Oriental coins in the Baltic region have included some dirhams found in very early grave contexts. However, it still remains uncertain if they date to before AD 800 (Callmer 1990, 31).

When we turn to the hoards with Oriental silver we have similar difficulties to pinpoint a deposition to before AD 800. There is the very smallish find from Hässelby, Dalhem parish, Gotland comprising three dirhams (of which one North-African) and with tpq. 796/797 (Corpus nummorum 1982, 19 ff.). It is also possible to count among the hoards of the Baltic region the well known hoard from Staraja Ladoga comprising thirty-one dirhams (of which eight North-African) and with tpq. 786/787 (Markov 1910, 140; Kirpičnikov 1988, 322). The real period of deposition of hoards of Oriental silver only begins after A.D. 800. The majority of the early hoards in the Baltic are small. Many of these small hoards of the first quarter of the 9th century have often been rejected as a relevant source material by scholars.

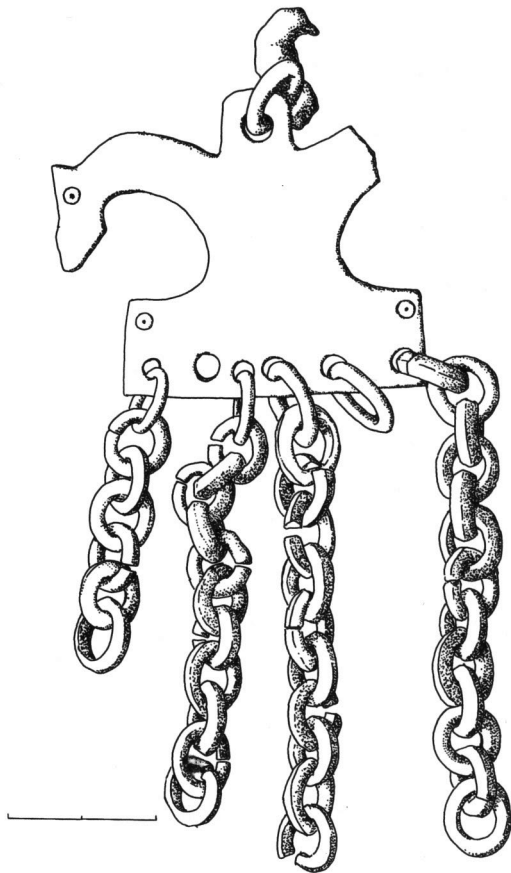


FIG. 4. CHAINHOLDER FROM RISTIMÄKI, S:T KARINS PARISH, PROV. OF FINLAND PROPER, FINLAND.

It may be agreed that the documentation of the finds is often weak but the gradual increase in size of the hoard finds, I think, carries some weight when we consider the development of hoarding in Northern Europe in the 9th century. Hoarding we must remember is a new cultural phenomenon in Northern Europe exactly like the use of dirhams as pendants (ultimately ending up in graves).

It has recently anew (cf. Fasmer 1930) been argued that North-African dirhams form a majority of the dirhams of the early hoards and of the period before the beginning of hoarding. Kilger has suggested that hoards without or with few North-African dirhams are not early at all and date to a later period (Kilger 2008, 218). A certain proportion is not seldom found in the early hoards but hoards with a majority of North-African dirhams are mainly found to have tpq:s only over a very short period of time (in fact tpq:s A.D. 805–815). Consequently the importance of the North-African dirhams has been overrated as a diagnostic feature of early hoards and it cannot be argued that the early silver artifacts of the 8th and 9th centuries were in fact made from North-African dirhams.

The lack of strong evidence for the presence of dirhams and other Oriental silver coins before A.D. 800 in the hoard material and among the grave finds makes it necessary to consider the coin material from the settlements as well. Unfortunately, also the early coin material from the settlements is meager. There are numerous finds of dirhams from 8th–9th century sites in Scandinavia and it is most likely that some of them really arrived before A.D. 800. When a reliable stratigraphy is there however it can be noted that dirhams turn up before A.D. 800. We have positive information from Birka, Ribe and, of course, also from Staraja Ladoga. From the 1990–1995 excavations at Birka there was one Abbasid dirham 778/779 and two blanks deposited in the late 8th century or ca. 800 (no later than 810) (Gustin 2011, 233). At Ribe Omayyad forged dirhams form a small hoard of ca. 4–7 coins (Feveile & Jensen 2000, 24). The layer is dendro dated to the 780s. In 1950 V.I. Ravdonikas found an Omayyad 699/700 dirham in a layer dated ca 770–790 (Kirpicnikov 1988, 325 ff.). The excavation 1973–1975 of a layer dendro dated to 770–780 by E.A. Rjabinin yielded three Oriental coins of which two were Tabaristani halfdrachms 768 and 783 (Rjabinin 1985, 51). The latter find is of considerable interest since it shows how rapidly Oriental coins could move from mint to final deposition in the North. That considerable

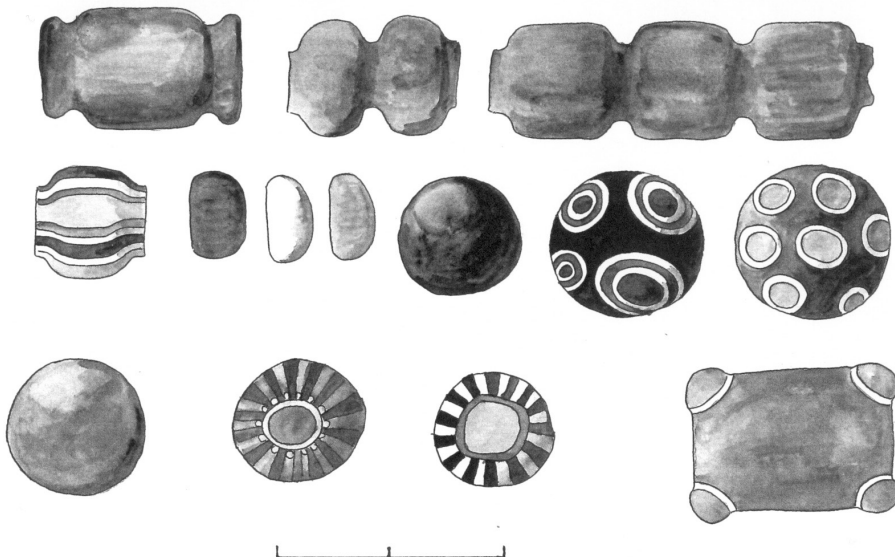


FIG. 5. EARLY ORIENTAL BEADS FROM THE NORTH. UPPER ROW: EXAMPLES OF SEGMENT BEADS. SECOND ROW FROM THE LEFT: SEGMENT BEAD WITH COMPOSITE SURFACE LAYER; THREE CUT BEADS; A PIERCED BEAD OF AMETHYST COLORED GLASS; TWO DROP EYE BEADS. THIRD ROW: SPHERICAL CORNELIAN BEAD; TWO MILLEFIORI BEADS; A BEAD OF NEVOLINO TYPE.