

From Pendants to Brooches

The exchange of Borre and Jellinge style motifs across the North Sea

By *Caroline Paterson*

1. Introduction

In Wilson's assessment of Viking Art styles he was somewhat disdainful of many of the finds belonging to the Borre style, dismissing them as »a handful of tawdry trinkets«. ¹ It is just such a group of ninth- and tenth-century trinkets that will be discussed below, since these mass-produced artefacts provide a fascinating insight into the transmission of Scandinavian motifs and their subsequent transformation within Anglo-Scandinavian areas of the British Isles.

In recent years there has been a great increase in the number of Scandinavian finds being recovered in England. A limited number have been retrieved as a result of urban development and excavation, but the vast majority have been recovered through the popular hobby of metal detecting. Although the common law of treasure trove has now been superseded by The Treasure Act of 1996, the new legislation's definition of »treasure« still requires a precious metal content of at least 10 % in the majority of cases, ² thereby excluding »tawdry trinkets« made of copper and lead alloys. Although the reporting and recording of such artefacts is recommended, there is no legal obligation to do so, and the majority of the finds are in private ownership. Most of the recent Borre- and Jellinge-style finds discussed below fall within this category, and it is thanks to the vigilance of individual museum curators and finds recorders,

and their public relations with metal detectorists that these finds have been made available for study.

2. The Insular Borre Style

The motifs displayed on these new finds have considerably broadened the repertoire of Borre- and Jellinge-style motifs previously thought to have existed within the British Isles. It can no longer be claimed, as by Wilson in 1976, ³ that the ring-chain is the only convincing Borre motif to occur in the British Isles. Borre-style creatures with characteristically interlaced bodies appear on the growing number of trefoil brooches of Scandinavian origin to be recorded, with Petersen types 89, 97, 100 and 109 represented among the finds to date. Moreover, a recent find of a Borre-style animal in classic gripping stance forms the centre-piece of an exceptionally fine, silver-rich, openwork pendant from Little Snoring, Norfolk (fig. 1). The animal's beady-eyed head is depicted en-face with elongated ears protruding at the base of the suspension loop. A close relative of this contorted four-legged creature with gripping paws is represented on some of the harness mounts from the Borre find itself, in Vestfold, Norway. ⁴ Four animal heads depicted in profile with prominent lap-pets decorate the circular frame, which is pelleted, as is the body of the central beast. The pendant is of Scandinavian origin, with its closest parallels having



Fig. 1. Borre-style silver pendant from Little Snoring, Norfolk. Illustration: Susan White, Norfolk Museums Service. 4:5.

a predominantly eastern Scandinavian distribution, a set of six such pendants having formed part of the Vårby hoard from Södermanland, Sweden.⁵ However, mould fragments for this particular variant with protruding ears (Norelund type) have been recovered from Hedeby, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany,⁶ attesting production at this site. Fine silver examples of the pendant have been recovered from Hedeby, Germany, Birka, Uppland, Sweden and Gnezdovo, Ukraine.

The rather simplistic association of the ring-chain motif, which frequently occurs on Insular sculpture, with the Scandinavian Borre style, can no longer go unqualified. For this »vertebral« ring-chain, with its composition of three bifurcating strands which interlock to form a midrib of truncated triangles, is not exclusive to Scandinavia and its origin is open to debate,⁷ with the Borre style being eclectic by nature. Certainly, bifurcating interlace is an integral element of the style's repertoire, but it is a different form of ring-chain, composed of a chain of lozenges

divided by horizontal bars with attendant side loops, as displayed on a series of strap-ends, represented by an example from Christchurch Place, Dublin,⁸ that more closely resembles the ring-chain depicted on the strap-tags from the find of Borre itself.⁹

3. Motifs and their association with object types

During the Viking Age certain motifs appear to have been associated with particular object types, a factor perpetuated by mass-production. Both the vertebral and lozenge versions of ring-chain commonly adorned strap-tags, their rectangular bodies lending themselves to registers of interlace. Small disc brooches were popular in Scandinavia in the ninth and tenth centuries, where they were used to fasten the front opening of womens' shifts, their convex shape accommodating gathered fabric.¹⁰ The form of Scandinavian disc brooches is distinguished not only by their convex profile, but also by a peculiar lug arrangement on their backs, comprising a double pin attachment positioned at right angles to the rim, as is the catchplate opposite.¹¹ In addition there is usually a third attachment loop, the function of which is debatable, though examples have been recovered with chains or strings of beads attached. One of the motifs commonly applied to such brooches is an arrangement of three Borre-style animal heads, depicted en-face with beady eyes and raised ears and separated by a central tripartite lobed element. The distribution of this brooch type¹² covers the whole of the Scandinavian world from Gnezdovo to Iceland, with at least twenty three examples from Birka alone.¹³ Over ten examples of the type have been recovered from locations within the Danelaw within recent years, including an example from near Doncaster, Yorkshire (fig. 2).¹⁴ A closely related motif

with three en-face animal heads, though in this case subordinate to the geometric ornament,¹⁵ is also represented amongst the recent metal detector finds from England.¹⁶ These English finds are indistinguishable from their Scandinavian parallels, suggesting that they were either imported from Scandinavia or produced by Scandinavian craftsmen within the Danelaw. The numbers of such Scandinavian disc brooches being recovered from the Danelaw suggests that the wearing of such brooches became fashionable in tenth-century England.

The association of particular motifs with certain object types was not always as set as these mass-produced series might suggest. This appears to have been particularly the case outside the Scandinavian homelands, perhaps as a response to changes in function, necessitated either by wear or damage, or as a response to cultural assimilation. The latter most probably accounts for the transfer of Borre- and Jellinge-style motifs, traditionally applied to pendants within Scandinavia, but appearing on brooches within the British Isles.

4. *Terslev motifs on pendants and brooches*

Scandinavian pendants are noticeably rare amongst the large numbers of recent metal detector finds being reported within England. The motif of a central triangle with splayed arms, bound by an inner ring which bifurcates into three volutes, which subsequently loop into an outer ring, assigns the pendant from Tathwell, Lincolnshire to Callmer's *Stora Ryk* type,¹⁷ thereby confirming its Scandinavian origin. A further Scandinavian pendant comes from Kirkby Green, also in Lincolnshire (fig. 3). Its ornament comprises a central lozenge with Terslev-type volutes, the looping intersections of which are overlain



Fig. 2. Convex disc brooch with Borre-style animal heads from near Doncaster, Yorkshire. Photo: National Museums of Scotland. 1:1.

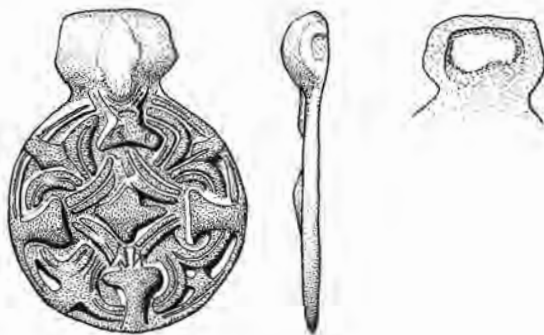


Fig. 3. Terslev pendant from Kirkby Green, Lincolnshire. Illustration: Kevin Leahy, North Lincolnshire Museums. 1:1.

by four solid »arms« emerging from the rim, in the fashion of the patrices used in the production of more ornate filigree and granulation versions.¹⁸ It is paralleled by a recent metal detector find from Postgården, Sønder-Tranders, Denmark.¹⁹ Both Lincolnshire pendants are of Scandinavian origin and display different variants of the Terslev motif, named after the ornament displayed on a group of elabo-



Fig. 4. Unprovenanced lead-alloy disc brooch with Terslev-derived motif. Photo: The British Museum. 1:1.

rate silver pendants from Zealand.²⁰ This motif is composed of three or four volutes, symmetrically arranged and positioned »back-to-back«, thereby creating either a triangle or lozenge in their respective centres. The volutes are frequently bound by a closed ring, creating a ring-knot commonly ascribed to the Borre style. Although the Terslev motif was present in European art from the Roman period onwards,²¹ it experienced a floruit during the mid-tenth century when it was applied to a series of high-status filigree and granulation pendants, which may have been directly associated with Danish royal power.²² Humbler versions of the motif appear on mass-produced, cast copper-alloy pendants and brooches of Scandinavian origin, with mould fragments from Hedeby testifying to production of several variants at this site.²³ The variant in which four volutes interlace with a square frame, which is itself divided into quadrants with pellets at the intersections, occurs on a brooch from Thurlton, Norfolk. A similar Terslev variant, in which pellet-filled lozenges overlie each of the four volutes, as on Callmer's Liljenäs pendant

type,²⁴ occurs on recent finds from Wereham, Norfolk and Ketsby, Lincolnshire. These finds differ from many of their Scandinavian prototypes in one fundamental respect, namely their occurrence on disc brooches as opposed to pendants. Both the Wereham and Ketsby finds were cast as brooches and although now damaged, originally had a set of parallel pin attachment lugs positioned at right angles to the rim of the brooch in typically Scandinavian fashion, and as such may reflect a conscious effort on the part of the Scandinavians to integrate with Anglo-Saxon dress fashion. Pendants were popular in tenth-century Scandinavia, as illustrated by the numerous examples bearing Borre- and Jellinge-style motifs from Birka,²⁵ but had long been out of fashion in Late Anglo-Saxon England. This provides a possible explanation for the small number of pendants reflecting Scandinavian influence to have been recovered from the British Isles, and could explain the transfer of motifs typically applied to pendants in the Scandinavian homelands, to brooches within Anglo-Scandinavian communities. Recent Danish finds of disc brooches bearing these same Terslev variants, including a brooch from Stentinget,²⁶ and an example of Callmer's Liljenäs pendant motif on a worn brooch from Ytri-Tjarnir, Iceland,²⁷ may have been produced by such Anglo-Scandinavian communities within the Danelaw, illustrating the possibilities for cultural exchange that existed between Anglo-Scandinavian communities and the Scandinavian homelands.

Although the above examples illustrate the transfer of a Scandinavian motif from one form of jewellery to another, the Terslev motif itself also underwent a transformation on some artefacts produced within the British Isles. Although the motif's appear-



Fig. 5. *The Saffron Walden pendants.* Photo: Saffron Walden Museum. 4:5.

ance in England need not reflect Scandinavian influence, some bound versions are so Scandinavian in appearance as to suggest such an origin. The misunderstood construction of the Terslev motif on an unprovenanced, lead-alloy brooch (fig. 4), is one such example.²⁸ The ornament on this brooch is difficult to follow, not only as a result of wear to the soft lead-alloy surface, but also because of constructional inconsistencies within the design. The ornament comprises a pelleted central lozenge, the arms of which terminate in volutes, typical of the Terslev series. These are bound together by an irregular ring with triangular extensions placed between each volute. The whole design is embellished with cast pelleting, which although associated with the rim in some instances, has been integrated with the interlace on other occasions, with stray volute strands branching off to encircle adjacent pellets in a manner unparalleled within Scandinavia. However, the layout of the design is clearly based on the Terslev motif and bears a remarkable resemblance to one of the variants de-

picted on the disc brooch series represented at Birka,²⁹ such a brooch having possibly provided its model. Similar lead-alloy disc brooches bearing Terslev variants have been recovered from Pointon and Kirkby Green, both in Lincolnshire. There is evidence for the production of lead-alloy brooches at Hedeby,³⁰ some of which display Terslev variants, including one example,³¹ which has a rather minimalist interpretation of the Terslev motif, its pelleting and layout reminiscent of the unprovenanced English example, with the volutes reduced to simple »V«s and the interconnecting triangles of the closed ring abandoned in favour of more pelleting. The similarities between these two brooches could suggest that the English find was imported from Hedeby. However, lead-alloy brooches were also manufactured within the British Isles, as attested by the hoard from Cheapside, London,³² and numerous finds bearing related linear and beaded patterns, frequently with voluted centre pieces. Only those displaying bound volutes, as the three examples referred to above, are likely to reflect direct Scandinavian influence, and as all three examples display misunderstandings of the Terslev motif's basic construction, they may well have been produced in an Anglo-Scandinavian community.

A further example of Terslev-derived motifs being produced in an area of cultural interchange, such as the Danelaw, is provided by the Saffron Walden pendants (fig. 5).³³ These are exceptional in being the only examples of pendants reflecting Scandinavian influence to have probably been produced within the British Isles. This pair of silver gilt pendants adorned a rich female inhumation from Saffron Walden, Essex. The ornamental sequence is the same for both pendants, and it is likely that they

were both cast from a single mould, with finishing touches accounting for slight differences. The main motif comprises four volutes bound by a square frame with pelleted corners and triquetra extensions linking it with the rim. The volutes are truncated on returning to the centre, a common feature on Terslev brooches when the central lozenge is portrayed as a separate, raised entity, thereby giving the impression of belonging to a different plane.³⁴ However, the centres of the Saffron Walden pendants are sunken, thereby breaking the logical sequence of interlace. Another unusual feature of the pendants is the clawed, foot-like appendages which extend from each pair of volutes, a highly stylised pair filling the barrel-shaped suspension loop. The addition of zoomorphic appendages to geometric interlace is a well attested Scandinavian practice, but the positioning of feet in the Saffron Walden suspension loops is unique, this element normally being adorned with knots, ridges or spirals, or an en-face head. The pendant borders have pellets capped by collared trilobate elements positioned between the triquetras. Such elaborate border schemes are not unknown in Scandinavia, a brooch from Hedeby having a single rim offshoot,³⁵ but the Saffron Walden pair is unusual in its variety of leitmotifs and their integration into the central Terslev knotting sequence. A Borre-style strap-slide from Wharram Percy, Yorkshire,³⁶ has a similarly integrated border, also incorporating collared lobes, pelleting and foot appendages. Scandinavian influence is clearly evident in the Saffron Walden pendants, as attested by Evison, who claims their place of manufacture to have been southern Scandinavia.³⁷ The chip-carved bands on the Saffron Walden pendants are in clear imitation of the filigree and granulation Terslev pro-

totypes from this area. However, the idiosyncratic details discussed above and paralleled on other objects from Anglo-Scandinavian contexts, suggest that this pair of pendants may be exceptional in having been manufactured in an Anglo-Scandinavian community within the British Isles, as first suggested by Wilson.³⁸ However, Anglo-Scandinavian pendants were clearly not a form of ornament that was to be popularised in ninth- and tenth-century England, and cultural interchange is more clearly reflected in the disc brooch series.

5. Two stages in the transfer of Jellinge-style motifs

Within Scandinavia there are over ninety pendants bearing variants of the motif of a single backward-looking animal, depicted in profile with a hatched body, biting a sheath-like object gripped in its paw.³⁹ This motif is usually ascribed to the Jellinge style, an association which Callmer is careful to avoid.⁴⁰ A similar backward-looking, billeted creature is depicted on one of the mounts from the Borre find itself,⁴¹ and the motif, although technically not S-shaped, can safely be ascribed to the Borre/Jellinge overlap period. The motif was introduced into the British Isles, most probably in pendant form, but recent finds of the motif on disc brooches, suggest that there was a conscious move to integrate with local fashion, which appears to have favoured disc brooches, in preference to pendants. East Anglia had its own ninth-century disc brooch series, which although likewise decorated with a backward-looking animal, is of a different lineage to the Scandinavian creature.⁴² The transfer of the Borre/Jellinge-style motif from pendants to brooches would appear to have taken place within an Anglo-Scandinavian

environment, for the disc brooch form adopted by such finds as those from Ingoldisthorpe, Norfolk,⁴³ and Thetford in Norfolk (fig. 6) is typically Scandinavian; namely convex with the lugs positioned at right-angles to the rim and on occasion including a third attachment loop. However, the motif's appearance on such brooches is slightly altered; the animal has chubbier jaws and a more prominent eye than its Scandinavian prototypes. The sites from which these convex brooches have been recovered are all in the rural Danelaw and suggest that Scandinavian women were included amongst the settlers to these parts. Within Scandinavia there are only a couple of appearances of this motif on convex brooches, one from Hedeby,⁴⁴ and a recent metal-detector find from Stentinget, Denmark.⁴⁵ With numerous examples from the Danelaw it is probable that the transfer of this motif from one Scandinavian object type to another was an Insular phenomenon, with these brooches being manufactured in the Danelaw and occasionally finding their way to Scandinavia. The transfer of Borre/Jellinge-style motifs from pendants to convex brooches also applies to Callmer's Kipplingeberg/Fiskeby type,⁴⁶ with its pair of asymmetrically positioned S-shaped creatures. This motif appears on convex disc brooches from Wetwang and Brocklesby, both in Lincolnshire.

A second stage in the process of cultural integration is reflected in the appearance of the single backward-looking Jellinge-style animal on two disc brooches of Anglo-Saxon type from York, one of which (fig. 7) was excavated from a tenth-century context at Coppergate.⁴⁷ On both examples the appearance of the creature is much altered, with chubby rounded jaws and a prominent round eye, but the motif is still clearly identifiable, with its distinctive



Fig. 6. Copper-alloy disc brooch from Thetford. Photo: P.J. Woods/E.C. Tippleston Photography (U.K.) Ltd. 1:1.

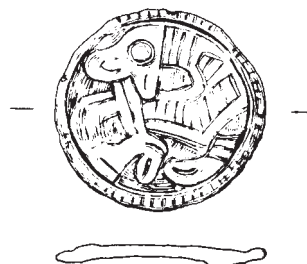


Fig. 7. Jellinge-style animal motif on a lead-alloy disc brooch from Coppergate, York. Illustration: York Archaeological Trust. 1:1.

sheath-like object clasped between hind-foot and jaw. The brooches are both flat with their lugs running parallel with their rims in typical Anglo-Saxon fashion. Both finds are made of lead-alloy, and the unstratified larger example has a triple pelleted border, typical for the Late Anglo-Saxon period. Their form, material and debased motifs all indicate that they are of local manufacture, York being an urban centre where cultural integration is much in evidence. Whether they were produced for native women with an eye for the exotic, or for Scandinavian customers who were not too fussed about the details of a familiar motif, remains open to conjecture. However, it is certain that these brooches were manufactured by native craftsmen using Scandina-

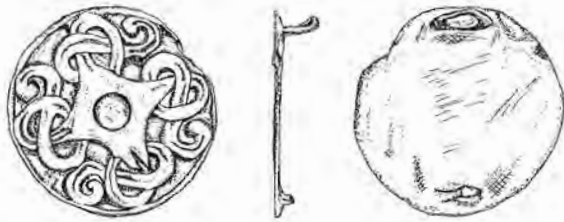


Fig. 8. Unprovenanced East Anglian disc brooch. Illustration: Caroline Paterson. 1:1.

vian models, and since these models appeared on small portable objects, such finds help to explain the ease with which Scandinavian styles and motifs were adapted and adopted abroad.

6. An origin for a series of brooches from East Anglia

This transmission of Scandinavian motifs from pendants to convex disc brooches, and in some cases to flat brooches of Anglo-Saxon type can be seen from the above to apply not only to variants of the Terslev motif, but also to Jellinge-style motifs. This process of cultural integration, expressed in different forms of jewellery may help to provide a long sought after explanation for the origin of a series of copper-alloy disc brooches with a predominantly East Anglian distribution. These flat disc brooches carry the motif of a sunken circle set in a lozenge, the four arms of which form tendrils which knot in a clockwise direction. This motif appears in two main variants, the difference between the two being the treatment of the central concave-sided lozenge and its relation to the sunken circle,⁴⁸ an unprovenanced example (fig. 8) belonging to the variety in which the circle appears as a mere depression in the raised quadrangu-



Fig. 9. Pendant from Kalmergård, Store Fuglede. Photo: National Museum of Denmark. 1:1.

lar field. There are now over fifty known examples of this brooch from the Danelaw, their form and distribution suggesting that they may have been produced in or around Norwich. However, there are also a few related, more individual expressions of the motif, one being that on a disc from Oxshott Wood, Surrey,⁴⁹ which is unusual in that its interlacing arms are positioned mid-way along each lozenge side, and are initially billeted and then have »eyes« in the angle of each looping arm, in typically Scandinavian fashion. The origin of the motif has long been debated, with Evison and Jansson both regarding it as Insular,⁵⁰ whilst Wilson argued that the knotting tendrils followed a similar sequence to that of Borre-style creatures and was therefore Scandinavian.⁵¹ The recent Danish metal-detector find of a pendant from Kalmergård, Store Fuglede, Denmark,⁵² (fig. 9), with an identical motif to that from Oxshott Wood, supports the notion that the motif is Scandinavian in origin. Indeed it is likely that the Oxshott Wood disc was originally a pendant, which has either lost its suspension loop or had it removed. Although Wilson's association of the knotting tendrils with Borre-style creatures is tenuous,

these tendril offshoots, with their occasional hint of a zoomorphic ancestry, are not unlike the encircling, asymmetrical arrangement of style II animals on a series of Gotlandic Vendel-period disc brooches, which often have a centre-piece composed of a circle set in a lozenge.⁵³ In the light of the transfer of other Scandinavian motifs from pendants to brooches, it seems probable that the Kalmergården pendant may be relatively early in the series, predating the East Anglian series. Within Scandinavia the inanimate form of this motif appears on a few convex disc brooches, including recent metal-detector finds from Lindholm Høje and Sebbersund, both in Jutland, Denmark, and excavated examples from Syvsig, Jutland and Birka, Sweden,⁵⁴ the latter two coming from late ninth- and early tenth-century contexts. The East Anglian versions of this motif occur without exception on flat disc brooches of Late Anglo-Saxon type, with a slightly elaborate example from Norwich Castle Bailey having an incised double flange.⁵⁵ Few of these finds come from datable contexts, but eleventh-century dates are ascribed to those which have been excavated. This motif would therefore appear to have originated in Scandinavia, where it was applied to both pendants and convex disc brooches, but experienced its floruit in East Anglia having been transferred to flat disc brooches. This sequence involving the transfer of Scandinavian motifs from pendants to brooches of Anglo-Saxon type reflects cultural integration, and is applicable to several Scandinavian motifs. The nature and number of such brooches now being recovered suggests that they were mass produced within the Danelaw, and it is possible that the resultant trinkets found a ready market among women of both Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon origin.

Notes

1. Wilson & Klindt-Jensen 1966, 87.
2. The Treasure Act 1997, 3-4.
3. Wilson 1976, 502.
4. Brøgger 1916, fig. 1.
5. Graham-Campbell 1980, 47, no. 163:1.
6. Callmer 1989, 24.
7. Zak 1968.
8. Lang 1988, 95, fig. 118.
9. Brøgger 1916, 14, fig. 25; Richardson 1993, 152-60.
10. Hägg 1983, 344.
11. Jansson 1984, 58.
12. Petersen 1928, 125.
13. Jansson 1984, 62.
14. Richardson 1993, 21.
15. Jansson 1984, 61, Abb. 8:2, IID.
16. Richardson 1993, 22.
17. Callmer 1989, Abb. 3:5.
18. Elsner 1990, 64, fig. 3.
19. Arkæologiske udgravninger i Danmark 1990, 188.
20. Friis Johansen 1912.
21. Duczko 1985, 82.
22. Duczko 1995.
23. Capelle 1968, Tafs. 10:2, 27:8; Jankuhn 1950, 11.
24. Callmer 1989, Abb. 3:18.
25. Callmer 1989.
26. Nilsson 1994, 68, fig. 5e.
27. Eldjárn 2000, 369, figs. 260-261.
28. British Museum (M & LA, M 2893).
29. Jansson 1984, 61, Abb. 8:2, Type III B & 65.
30. Capelle 1968, 71-3.
31. Hb - Hafn, LW68.
32. *Catalogue of the Collection of London Antiquities in the Guildhall Museum*, London 1903, 120 & Pl. LIV.
33. Evison 1969, Pl. LXXI.
34. Duczko 1985, 83, fig. 105.
35. Hb 1964C, Grab 68.
36. Beresford & Hurst 1990, Pl. 5; Paterson in Stamper & Croft 2000, 128-131.
37. Evison 1969, 337.
38. Wilson 1976, 506.
39. Callmer 1989, 38-40.
40. Callmer 1989, 23.

41. Brøgger 1916, 14, figs 18, 19 & 21.
42. Smedley & Owles 1965.
43. Margeson 1997, 24 fig. 29.
44. Callmer 1989, 40.
45. Nilsson 1994, fig. 5b.
46. Callmer 1989, 23, 39-40.
47. Hall 1984, fig. 61; Roesdahl et al. (eds.) 1981, 121.
48. Richardson 1993, 30.
49. Wilson 1956.
50. Evison 1957, 222; Jansson 1984, 63-4.
51. Wilson 1976, 506.
52. Nationalmuseet C 32167, KN 1.
53. Nerman 1969, Taf. 104:879; Evison 1957, 222.
54. Rieck 1982, 8; Jansson 1984, 61, Abb. 8:2, III E.
55. Ayers 1985, 28, fig. 24:1.

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