Danish Journal of Archaeology, 2014
Vol. 3, No. 2, 175–186, http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21662282.2015.1055160

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Two new denarius hoards from the island of Lolland

Anders Rasmussen*

Museum Lolland-Falster, Nykøbing Falster, Denmark

(*Received 9 January 2015; accepted 19 March 2015*)

Since 2009, a number of Roman denarii from the 1st, 2nd and 3rd centuries AD have been discovered on the Danish island of Lolland. Among them, two denarius hoards contained, respectively, approximately 110 and 46 coins. Previously, only few imported objects from the Late Roman Iron Age were known from Lolland, in stark contrast to the large amount of imported prestigious artefacts from the preceding Early Roman Iron Age. These denarius finds shed new light on an otherwise poorly understood time period in the region, especially with regard to the possible networks of trade and exchange in which the local population took part. As the presence of denarii in an Iron Age context is often interpreted as a sign of contacts ultimately extending beyond the bounds of present-day Denmark, this article explores the possibility that the in casu denarius finds from Lolland point to the existence of local settlements participating in the flow of elite exchange during the 3rd and possibly also 4th centuries AD.

Keywords: late Roman Iron Age; denarii; Roman coins; hoards; Lolland; exchange

Introduction

In January 2013, a hoard containing Roman denarii from the Imperial period was found on the Danish island of Lolland (Figure 1). The hoard itself contained no less than 110 coins in various states of preservation, and was located on a field owned and cultivated by the nearby Knuthenlund Manor. A year and a half later, during the summer of 2014, another hoard containing 46 well-preserved denarii was found on Lolland near the outskirts of the small settlement Hillested. Before then the only known denarii from Lolland consisted of 13 single-finds, placing the island among the Danish regions with the lowest yield of Roman coinage (Horsnæs 2010, p. 46) (Figure 2).

Because of its prominent geographical position between Zealand and the European mainland, the island of Lolland has always acted as a bridgehead facilitating cultural and material exchange between the North and the South. Traces of foreign cultural influences, and sites functioning as points of interest and commerce along the vast network of trade routes flowing through The *Barbaricum* during the time of the early Roman emperors, are thus well accounted for in connection with excavations and archaeological surveys. It is therefore no surprise that in recent years a number of new finds of Roman denarii have appeared, both as single-finds and in hoards. As of yet, no Roman coin on Lolland has been found as part of an assemblage of grave-goods, as Charon's fees or in any other context that might even loosely be interpreted as a burial (Dyhrfjeld-Johnsen 2011, p. 140ff.) The only archaeological excavation in connection with the discovery of Roman coins was conducted during the spring of 2013 on the site of the Tagesgård Hoard. Barring a few notable exceptions, the original depositional contexts of all other denarii from Lolland are unknown.

It is by no means an easy task to provide a qualified interpretation of a category of finds so complex and dynamic as the Roman coinage. Given that the total body of finds can only ever increase, it isn't a futile endeavour to attempt an analysis on a regional scale. The challenge, however, is to adjust the established perception so that it aligns itself more closely with the new material reality. In light of this, the present paper will attempt to provide an updated account of the present find-situation regarding Roman denarii on the island of Lolland.

The denarius hoards on Lolland

Denarius hoards dated to the Roman and Early Germanic Iron Age are well known phenomena from Denmark as well as the region comprising The *Barbaricum* beyond the northern fringes of the Roman Empire (Horsnæs 2010). The regional distribution of the denarius hoards within the borders of present-day Denmark is however far from uniform. One explanation for this is the varying intensity of detector surveying in different parts of the country, as well as a tendency to concentrate the effort in and around areas known for previous finds of ancient treasures. When looking at the total sum of finds however, it is quite evident that the clusters of single-finds and hoards are not merely the result of chance and happenstance in recent decades,

*Email: ar@museumlollandfalster.dk

Figure 1. Map of Denmark (sans Bornholm) showing the position of the island of Lolland.

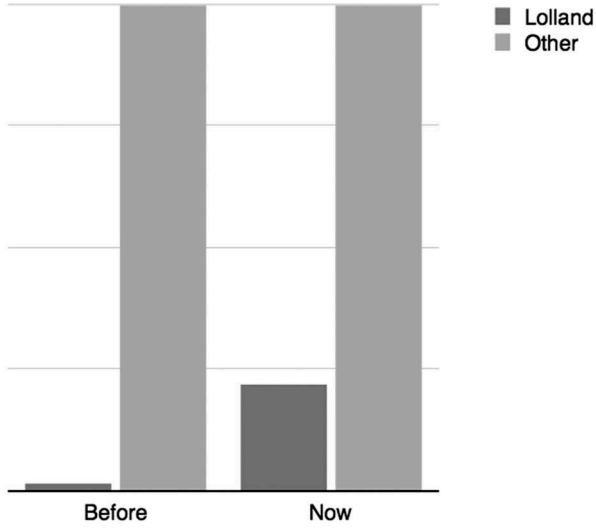

Figure 2. The changes in the amount of denarii from the island of Lolland compared to the number of roman coins found on Zealand and the islands of Falster and Møn. The omission of numerical descriptors is intentional, as the chart is only intended to show the relative rise in the number of Roman coins. The total number of known finds used in the comparison is from Horsnæs (2010, 41).

but are also rooted in the societal and regional power structures of Iron Age Denmark. Roman coins found in the context of Iron Age sites belong to the same group of imported objects including such items as glassware and -beads, as well as vessels of bronze and silver. While the function and desirability of the objects within this body of imported goods obviously differed, the channels through which the prestigious wares and Roman coins travelled from south to north were most likely the same.

The island of Lolland was until recently regarded as one of the regions of Denmark with the lowest yield of Roman coinage. Denarii were only known from scattered single-finds (four by the publication of the most recent overview of known finds, *Crossing Boundaries*, from 2010), and only a few of the base metal denominations were known (Horsnæs 2010, p. 160ff). The recent discovery of two denarius hoards as well as several denarii as single-finds thus constitutes a significant change in the known local distribution of Roman coinage (Figure 3).

The Tagesgård Hoard

The area surrounding Knuthenlund Manor, located to the north of the small town of Stokkemarke on Lolland, consists mostly of arable land and pockets of forested areas, crossed by small streams and modern roadways. The Tagesgård Hoard was discovered at the edge of a small plateau situated on the western bank of Ørby Å (Ørby Stream), a now tamed and regulated body of water leading towards the northern coastline. To the south, the small farmhouse that lent its name to the hoard (*Tagesgård = Tages Farm*) was easily viewable atop a hilly terrain that is known for previous wetland finds of wagon parts dating back to the Pre-Roman Iron Age (Schovsbo 1987, p. 216) as well as ring-gold from the Early Germanic Iron Age.

The hoard itself contained at least 110 denarii scattered around an area close to 140 by 90 m (Rasmussen 2013) (Figure 4).[1] A concentration of coins to the east of the area marked this as the likely spot of the original deposition. A small excavation conducted on-site during the spring of 2013 revealed a number of postholes and pits, as well as the traces of three small longhouses, of which two had a spatial overlap. Generally the remains were badly eroded, mainly due to agricultural activities. This probably also explains why no *in situ* remains of the hoard were found as well as the general lack of occupational deposits and cultural layers. The main concentration of denarii was situated in the topsoil immediately above the southern end of the easternmost longhouse (House I) (Figure 5). While this provides a possible context for the deposition of the hoard, any link between the denarii and House I is a tentative conclusion at present.

In general, the Tagesgård denarii appear to be in varying states of preservation[2] (Figure 6). While the amount of wear and tear is within the normal range of denarii from western Denmark, the level of corrosion is

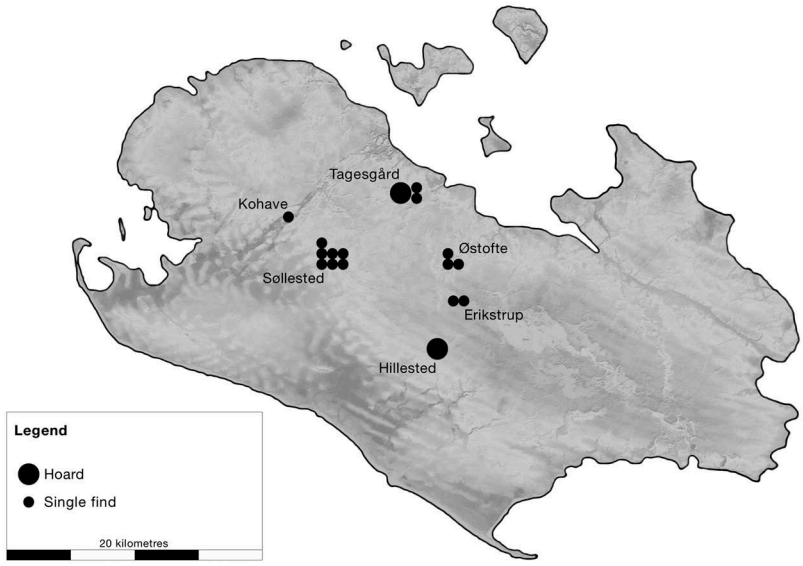

Figure 3. Cut-out of a topographical map showing the placement of all hitherto known find spots of denarii on the island of Lolland. A large circle shows the find spot of a hoard, while a small circle shows the location of a single-find. Background map, Kort & Matrikelstyrelsen.

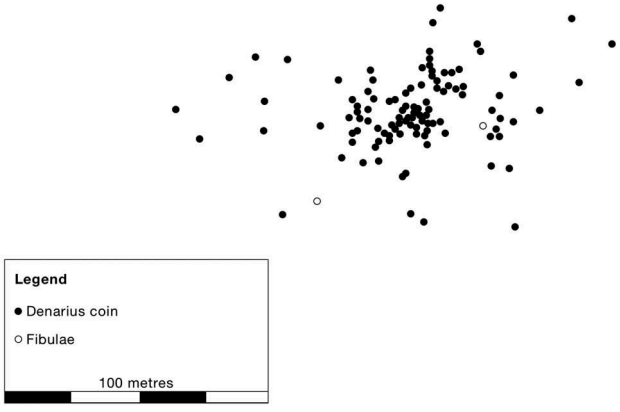

Figure 4. The Tagesgård Hoard, the distribution of denarii (status 2014).

in some instances well above the norm. The surface of several denarii in the Tagesgård Hoard is best described as having a rough and slightly corroded appearance, most likely the result of post-depositional processes connected to the slow disintegration of the original container. In addition, several scratches on the coins were clearly caused by the sand and light gravel in the plough layer.

The chronological composition of the Tagesgård Hoard spans the period from Otho to Caracalla (AD 69–211/12) (Table 1). The number of pre-Antonine denarii is low, with only two denarii from the turbulent Year of the Four Emperors in AD 69 (Otho, Vittelius) and a total of five denarii struck during the Flavian dynasty. The vast majority of denarii in the hoard were struck during the Nerva–Antonine dynasty (AD 96–192) comprising no less than 90% of the identified coins. Of these, the coinage of the emperors Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius dominates in the assemblage with a rather large amount struck in the name of the empresses Sabina, Faustina Major and Faustina Minor. The youngest denarii from the deposit were struck during the Severan dynasty and count a single denarius from the reign of Septimius Severus as well as a denarius dated to the first year of the reign of Caracalla (*c*. AD 211–12). The Caracalla coin also provides the *t.p.q*. for the entire assemblage, signifying that the hoard cannot have been deposited earlier than during the 3rd century AD.

The area surrounding the Tagesgård Hoard has yielded few items from the Iron Age, making it difficult to provide an interpretation of the hoard and its local context. During the 2013 excavation a small number of fragmented Iron Age fibulae were found; most were within the same general area as the Roman coins, but a few were lying in a small cluster to the west. A single fragment of a two-piece fibula belonging to Almgren type VII.2 was discovered *in situ* within a small pit at the eastern edge of the excavated area. The type is usually dated back to the first half of the Late Roman Iron Age, possibly the phase C1 b in the early decades of the 3rd century AD (Ethelberg 1990, p. 36). Bearing in mind that the typical use of a fibulae might very well bring it beyond the chronological bounds of the otherwise well-defined archaeological find categories, this date does seem to coincide with the assumed time frame for the deposition of the Tagesgård Hoard in the 3rd century AD. The small cluster of fragmented fibulae to

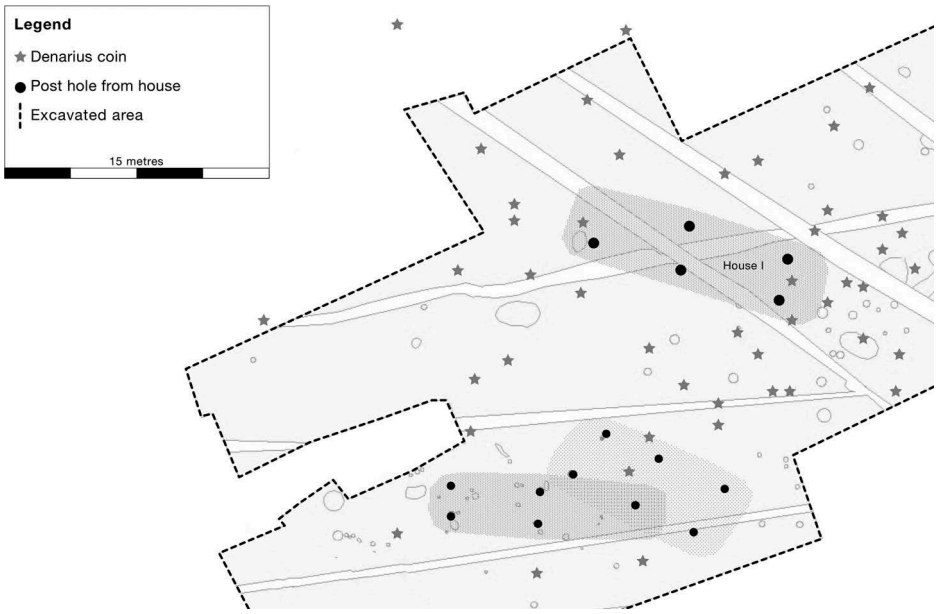

Figure 5. The main concentration of denarii from the Tagesgård Hoard and the settlement structures found beneath them. Denarii are marked with small circles; fibulae from the Roman Iron Age are marked with squares; fibulae from the Early Germanic Iron Age are marked with triangles. Background map, Kort & Matrikelstyrelsen.

the east consisted exclusively of cruciform fibulae from the Early Germanic Iron Age.

The Hillested Hoard

A year and a half after the discovery of the Tagesgård Hoard another denarius hoard, containing 46 coins, was found near the small town of Hillested at the centre of Lolland. The hoard was uncovered by detector surveying at the foot of a naturally raised area of land where an Iron Age burial ground as well as a settlement from the Roman Iron Age was discovered in the early twentieth century. A few hundred metres to the north of the find-spot a small body of water, Nordkanalen (the Northern Canal), trickles towards the southern coastline, where the mouth of the stream flows into the Fehmarn Belt. During the Iron Age, well before the draining of Rødby Fjord in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, it would most likely have been possible to travel by small boat or barge as far inland as Hillested and possibly beyond.

The majority of the denarii from the Hillested Hoard were found in a cluster at the southwestern edge of a large gravel pit, which was frequently used in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Figure 7). Five denarii lay approximately 50 m to the north, separated from the main concentration by an approximately 30-m stretch devoid of any finds. Towards the southwest a gradual upwards slope marked the contours of an oblong hill, constituting the single-most significant topographical feature of the area. So far 46 denarii have been found on the site – most of them scattered within an area of approximately 50 by 50 m. Due to the close proximity of the now defunct gravel pit, it is likely that some pieces of the original deposit have been removed unbeknownst to the workers at the site.

The denarii from the Hillested Hoard are all in a good state of preservation. Visible traces of corrosion on the coins are almost impossible to detect, and the amount of wear and tear is low. While this may imply that only a short period of time has passed since the destruction of the deposition, the possible removal of parts of the original hoard by gravel digging could well mask the true extent of the spread and thus skew the chronological assessment.

A single denarius struck during the reign of Domitian marks the only pre Nerva-Antonine coin in the hoard. The denarii from Nerva to Commodus dominate the assemblage, gravitating slightly towards the late 2nd century AD with a high number of denarii struck during Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Commodus (Table 2). A single denarius struck during the reign of Septimius Severus provides a possible *t.p.q*. of the Hillested Hoard to *c*. AD 193–94, although this date is obviously preliminary and subject to change given that new findings may be unearthed in the coming years.

The Iron Age burials at the site of the Hillested Hoard were discovered in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At present, five inhumation graves are known, as well as at least 10 cremation graves in the form of urn burials: several of them furnished with exquisite grave-goods such as fine drinking horns with

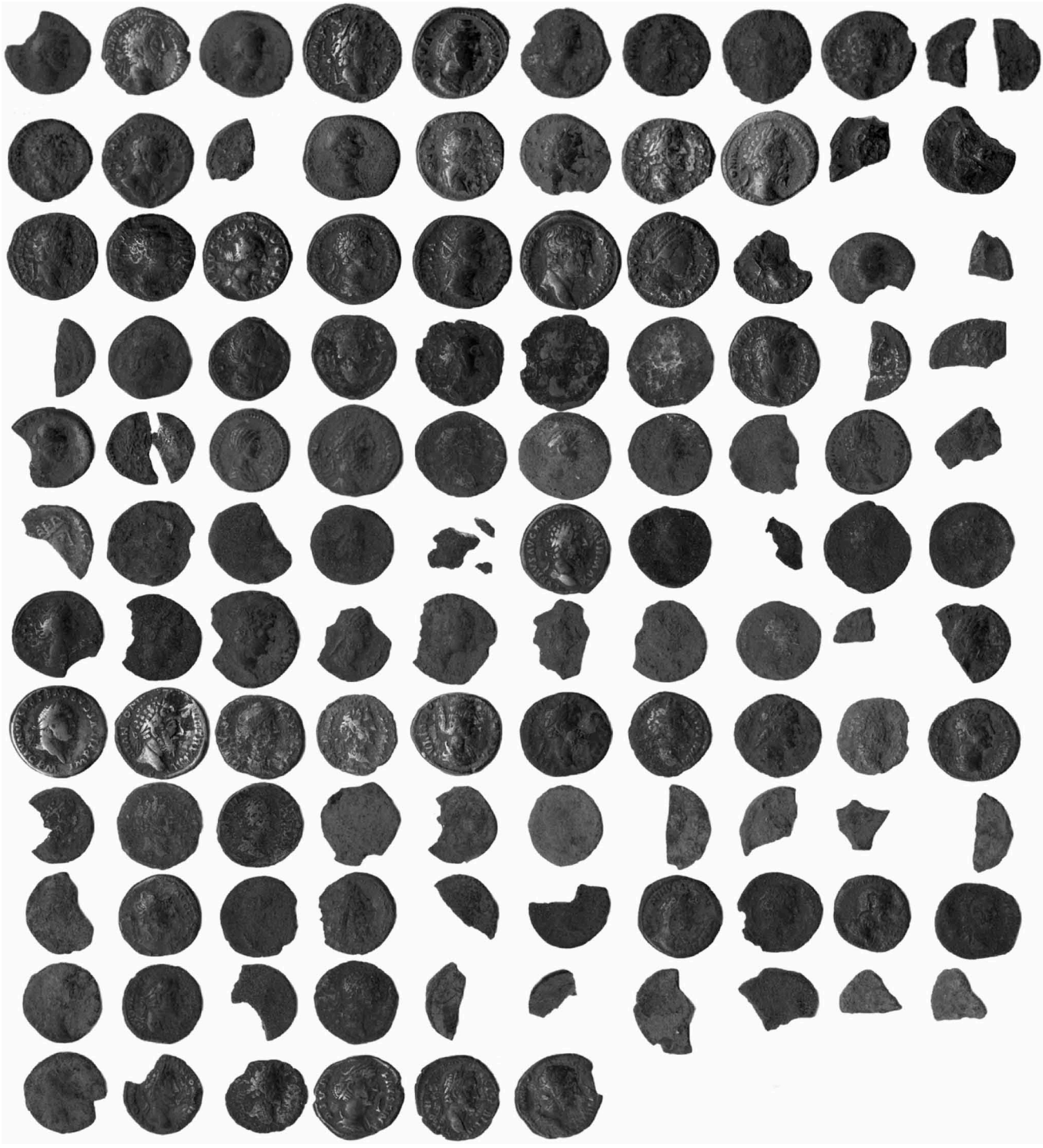

Figure 6. The Tagesgård Hoard. Not shown in chronological order. Museum Lolland-Falster.

bronze fittings as well as glass vessels, one of which has been identified as belonging to Eggers type 230 (Lund Hansen 1987, p. 419, 1995, p. 442 and 449). As the majority of these graves were found by gravel diggers, the handling of the bones and grave-goods can best be described as 'rough'. It was only through the timely intervention of local citizens and a subsequent excavation conducted by the National Museum of Denmark that any information about these early finds has survived to this day.[3] The far from fully excavated burial site at Hillested covering both cremation graves from the Early Roman Iron Age as well as inhumation

Table 1. List of denarii from the Tagesgård Hoard.

Number	Museum ID	Emperor (date AD)	RIC type
1	MLF00854x001	Otho (69)	10
2	MLF00854x019	Vitellius (69)	
2	MLF00854x096	Vitellius (69)	71 (2nd ed.)
3	MLF00854x041	Vespasian/Titus? (69–81)	-
4	MLF00854x029	Vespasian (Titus Caesar)? (72–81)	-
5	MLF00854x071	Titus (80)	25a
6	MLF00854x020	Flavian coin (Titus?) (69–81)	-
7	MLF00854x037	Titus?/Domitian? (80–82)	-
8	MLF00854x099	Trajan (103–111)	156–157
9	MLF00854x080	Trajan (114–117)	-
10	MLF00854x014	Trajan (114–117)	-
11	MLF00854x085	Trajan (98–117)	-
12	MLF00854x053	Trajan? (98–117)	-
13	MLF00854x104	Trajan (98–117)	-
14	MLF00854x067	Trajan(?) (98–117)	-
15	MLF00854x045	Trajan (98–117)	-
16	MLF00854x009	Hadrian (119–122)	122
17	MLF00854x012	Hadrian (117–122)	-
18	MLF00854x092	Hadrian (125–128)	172
19	MLF00854x098	Hadrian (134–138)	241Aa
20	MLF00854x026	Hadrian (134–138)	256
21	MLF00854x116	Hadrian (117–138)	-
22	MLF00854x100	Hadrian (117–138)	-
23	MLF00854x032	Hadrian (117–138)	-
24	MLF00854x034	Hadrian (117–138)	-
25	MLF00854x038	Hadrian (117–138)	-
26	MLF00854x086	Hadrian (117–138)	-
27	MLF00854x068	Hadrian (117–138)	-
28	MLF00854x063	Hadrian (117–138)	-
29	MLF00854x109	Hadrian (117–138)	-
29	MLF00854x040	Hadrian? (117–138)	-
30	MLF00854x066	Hadrian (117–138)	-
31	MLF00854x084	Hadrian? (117–138)	-
32	MLF00854x010-1	Hadrian? (117–138)	-
33	MLF00854x078	Hadrian (Sabina) (128–136)	-
34	MLF00854x054	Hadrian (Sabina) (128–136)	-
35	MLF00854x094	Hadrian (Sabina) (128–136)	-
36	MLF00854x064	Hadrian (Sabina) (128–136)	-
37	MLF00854x115	Antoninus Pius (149–150)	187
38	MLF00854x017	Antoninus Pius (151–152)	217(?)
39	MLF00854x076	Antoninus Pius (155–157)	250, 262 (Annona)
40	MLF00854x077	Antoninus Pius (155–157)	254, 264 (Salus)
41	MLF00854x102	Antoninus Pius (147–158)	164,180,189,196,223,267
42	MLF00854x097	Antoninus Pius (159–160)	304
43	MLF00854x021	Antoninus Pius (140–160)	-
44	MLF00854x004	Antoninus Pius (140–160)	-
45	MLF00854x105	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
45	MLF00854x070	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
46	MLF00854x008	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
47	MLF00854x074	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
48	MLF00854x016	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
49	MLF00854x090	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
49	MLF00854x048	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
50	MLF00854x111	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
51	MLF00854x036	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
52	MLF00854x062	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
53	MLF00854x113	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
54	MLF00854x028	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
55	MLF00854x031	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
56	MLF00854x039	Antoninus Pius? (138–161)	-

(*continued*)

Table 1. (*Continued*).

Number	Museum ID	Emperor (date AD)	RIC type
57	MLF00854x013	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
58	MLF00854x005	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	344
59	MLF00854x114	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	347
60	MLF00854x061	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	353
61	MLF00854x003	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	361
62	MLF00854x007	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	363
63	MLF00854x033	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	384
64	MLF00854x025	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	384
65	MLF00854x022	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	-
66	MLF00854x073	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (141–161)	-
67	MLF00854x035	Antoninus Pius (Diva(?) Faustina 1) (138–161)	-
68	MLF00854x006	Antoninus Pius (Diva(?) Faustina 1) (138–161)	-
69	MLF00854x010-2	Antoninus Pius (Diva(?) Faustina 1)? (138–161)	-
69	MLF00854x087	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1) (138–161)	-
70	MLF00854x089	Antoninus Pius (Diva(?) Faustina 1) (138–161)	-
71	MLF00854x107	Antoninus Pius (Diva Faustina 1)? (141–161)	-
72	MLF00854x060	Antoninus Pius (Marcus Aurelius Caesar) (140–147)	429a
73	MLF00854x059	Antoninus Pius (Marcus Aurelius Caesar) (140–161)	-
74	MLF00854x046	Antoninus Pius (Faustina 2) (161)	513d/515a/515 b
75	MLF00854x083	Antoninus Pius/Marcus Aurelius (Diva(?) Faustina 2) (146–176)	-
76	MLF00854x082	Antoninus Pius/Marcus Aurelius (138–180)	-
77	MLF00854x081	Antoninus Pius/Marcus Aurelius (cæsar?) (140–180)	-
78	MLF00854x079	Antoninus Pius/Marcus Aurelius (cæsar?) (140–180)	-
79	MLF00854x018	Marcus Aurelius (168)	183
80	MLF00854x072	Marcus Aurelius (170–171)	227
81	MLF00854x042	Marcus Aurelius (170–171)	231
82	MLF00854x049	Marcus Aurelius (175)	327
83	MLF00854x011	Marcus Aurelius (161–180)	-
84	MLF00854x050	Marcus Aurelius? (161–180)	-
85	MLF00854x093	Marcus Aurelius (Divus Antoninus) (161–180)	436
86	MLF00854x091	Marcus Aurelius (Divus Antoninus) (161–180)	436
87	MLF00854x015	Marcus Aurelius (Divus Antoninus) (161–180)	-
88	MLF00854x047	Marcus Aurelius (Lucius Verus) (163–164)	515
89	MLF00854x056	Marcus Aurelius (Lucius Verus) (165)	540
90	MLF00854x024	Marcus Aurelius (Commodus Caesar) (177)	627
91	MLF00854x023	Marcus Aurelius (Faustina 2) (161–180)	676
92	MLF00854x027	Marcus Aurelius (Lucilla) (161–180)	771
93	MLF00854x051	Marcus Aurelius (Lucilla) (161–180)	-
94	MLF00854x095	Marcus Aurelius/Commodus (possibly Crispina/Lucilla) (161–192)	-
95	MLF00854x112	Commodus (182)	45
96	MLF00854x057	Commodus (186)	129
97	MLF00854x002	Commodus (187–188)	167
98	MLF00854x044	Commodus (189)	188
99	MLF00854x101	Commodus (191–192)	254a
100	MLF00854x058	Unknown	-
101	MLF00854x075	Septimius Severus (Julia Domna) (193–196)	535–536
102	MLF00854x043	Caracalla (Plautilla) (211–212)	359
103	MLF00854x052	Unknown	-
104	MLF00854x065	Unknown	-
105	MLF00854x103	Unknown	-
106	MLF00854x108	Unknown	-
107	MLF00854x055	Unknown	-
108	MLF00854x088	Unknown	-
109	MLF00854x106	Unknown	-
110	MLF00854x069	Unknown	-

Note: The coins are listed in chronological order. RIC type is listed when known.

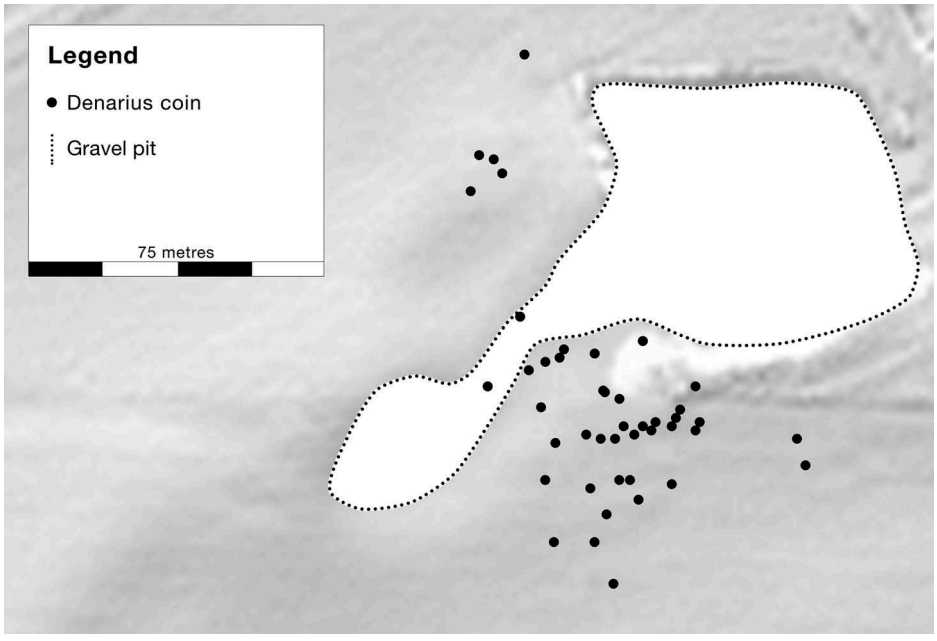

Figure 7. The Hillested Hoard, the distribution of denarii (status 2014). The location of the gravel pits is marked on the map.

graves, of which some are definitely from the Late Roman Iron Age, provides an obvious clue to the longevity of the adjoining settlement and the network of exchange in which it took part.

Denarii as single-finds

Except for the two denarii from Erikstrup found in connection with the building of the railroad between Maribo and Nakskov in the 1880s and a single Antonine denarius from Søllested, found in 1969, all denarii from Lolland have been found as a result of detector surveying. Since the search of increasingly larger areas with metal detector is becoming more and more frequent, the pace with which new finds and sites are being added to our knowledge of the past is accelerating quite rapidly. The challenge is then to preserve as much information as possible regarding the circumstances of the findings and their surroundings, knowing full well that in evaluating the importance of single-finds an understanding of context is the key.

A single republican denarius from Kohave on western Lolland was found by a detectorist in 2002 (Horsnæs 2002). While the find spot itself did not yield any supplementary material by which the original depositional context might be interpreted, the surrounding area was known for a number of settlements, burials and single-finds from the Iron Age. Among them was the Early Roman Iron Age burial site at Juellinge, situated only a few kilometres away from Kohave, at the eastern end of an old, now dried out waterway connected to the inlet of Rødby Fjord (Müller 1911, Koch 1986).

The area surrounding the present-day village of Søllested has yielded the largest number of denarii as single-finds on Lolland, total eight coins from four separate locations. An Antonine denarius was allegedly found on a field to the east of the village in 1969, but the exact find spot is unfortunately unknown. All remaining Roman coins from the area around Søllested have been found by detector surveying within the three-year period from 2009 to 2012. Four denarii, counting one Trajan, two Antonine and one Marcus Aurelius, were found in the latter part of 2009 on a field to the east of Søllested. With a distance of approximately 50 m between each of these coins, it is unlikely that they represent the remains of a hoard disturbed and scattered by agricultural processes. Another Antonine denarius was found to the west of the local church in Søllested, this time however with no auxiliary finds to indicate whether or not the site had been settled or used for other purposes during the Iron Age. The last two denarii were found lying a mere 70 m apart at the southern edge of a small forested area to the north of Søllested. One of these coins was struck under Antoninus Pius while the other had been made during the reign of Commodus and carried the image and dedication to his wife, the empress Crispina.

From the area surrounding the present-day villages of Erikstrup and Østofte, located two kilometres apart, five denarii are known from three separate locations. The two aforementioned denarii from Erikstrup were found in the

Table 2. List of denarii from the Hillested Hoard.

Number	Museum ID	Emperor (date AD)	RIC type
1	MLF01399x003	Domitian (81–96)	-
2	MLF01399x012	Nerva (96–98)	7
3	MLF01399x009	Trajan (98–117)	-
4	MLF01399x007	Hadrian (117–138)	-
5	MLF01399x013	Hadrian (117–138)	-
6	MLF01399x015	Hadrian (117–138)	-
7	MLF01399x030	Hadrian (Sabina) (128–136)	-
8	MLF01399x002	Antoninus Pius (147–148)	163
9	MLF01399x006	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
10	MLF01399x016	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
11	MLF01399x020	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	177
12	MLF01399x021	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
13	MLF01399x023	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
14	MLF01399x024	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
15	MLF01399x025	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
16	MLF01399x031	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
17	MLF01399x034	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
18	MLF01399x035	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
19	MLF01399x036	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
20	MLF01399x040	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
21	MLF01399x043	Antoninus Pius (138–161)	-
22	MLF01399x004	Antoninus Pius (Faustina) (138–141)	-
23	MLF01399x008	Antoninus Pius (Faustina) (138–141)	-
24	MLF01399x018	Antoninus Pius (Faustina) (138–141)	-
25	MLF01399x027	Antoninus Pius (Faustina) (138–141)	-
26	MLF01399x029	Marcus Aurelius (161–180)	-
27	MLF01399x001	Marcus Aurelius (161–180)	-
28	MLF01399x038	Marcus Aurelius/Lucius Verus (163–164)	-
29	MLF01399x005	Marcus Aurelius (Faustina) (146–176)	-
30	MLF01399x011	Marcus Aurelius (Faustina) (146–176)	-
31	MLF01399x018	Marcus Aurelius (Faustina) (146–176)	-
32	MLF01399x019	Marcus Aurelius (Faustina) (146–176)	-
33	MLF01399x026	Marcus Aurelius (Faustina) (146–176)	-
34	MLF01399x039	Marcus Aurelius? (Faustina?) (146–176)	-
35	MLF01399x042	Marcus Aurelius? (Faustina?) (146–176)	-
36	MLF01399x045	Marcus Aurelius? (Faustina?) (146–176)	-
37	MLF01399x032	Marcus Aurelius/Lucius Verus (Lucilla) (164)	-
38	MLF01399x028	Commodus (180–192)	-
39	MLF01399x033	Commodus (183)	-
40	MLF01399x037	Commodus (183)	187
41	MLF01399x041	Commodus (180–192)	-
42	MLF01399x044	Commodus (180–192)	-
43	MLF01399	Septimius Severus (193–211)	-
44	MLF01399	Unknown	-
45	MLF01399	Unknown	-

Note: The coins are listed in chronological order. RIC type is listed when known.

1880s on a field known for a previous find of a gold necklace, a gold ring and golden rods from the Late Roman Iron Age (Jørgensen and Vang Petersen 1998, p. 122; Horsnæs 2010, p. 84ff). From Østofte a single denarius struck during the reign of Marcus Aurelius (after AD 161) was found in 2009. A few hundred metres to the east of this find, two denarii were discovered by a local detectorist during the winter of 2014. One of the coins, an Antonine denarius, was well preserved. The other, however, was a heavily worn denarius from the Flavian period, possibly struck during the reign of either Vespasian or Titus.[4]

Traces of numerous settlements from the Roman and Early Germanic Iron Age have been found near Søllested during archaeological surveys and excavations, indicating that the area was densely populated during the first half of the first millennium AD.[5] While the seven denarii appear to be the only objects from the Late Roman Iron Age signalling local wealth as well as a possible link to a wider network of exchange and foreign connections, a number of prestigious

objects from the Early Germanic Iron Ages seem to signify the importance of the area on a wider scale. Likewise, from the areas near the villages of Erikstrup and Østofte, a number of sites dated to the Roman and Germanic Iron Ages have previously been registered. The only known Iron Age war booty sacrifice from Lolland, Sørup, was found in connection with peat digging less than 1 km to the west of the denarii from Østofte. Despite the fact that no excavation has ever been conducted on the site of the sacrifice, the unearthed pieces of weapons and armour imply at least two depositional horizons dated to the phases B2 and C1 b, as well as a possible deposition dated to C3/D1 (Lund Hansen 1995, p. 244, Figure 9:1; Ilkjær 2002, p. 57). While the find was relatively small compared to the large weapon deposits from the Jutland Peninsula, it does point to the existence of a local centre of power, possibly the residence of a local magnate or chief.

Roman coins, Roman connections?

From the first two centuries AD, there is an abundance of evidence linking Lolland to a wider network of aristocratic connections and the exchange of prestigious goods. Several burials containing the remains of the rich and powerful individuals of the Early Roman Iron Age, interred with a selection of some of their finest and most exquisite worldly possessions, are known from the island. The princely burial from Hoby, dated to the Phase B1a and furnished with a complete set of Roman tableware as well as other prestigious goods of Roman origin, is considered one of the wealthiest graves from the Early Roman Iron Age in Northern Europe (Lund Hansen 1987, p. 193; Klingenberg 2011, p. 36). A high number of other wealthy burials from Lolland, all dated to the Early Roman Iron Age, highlights the existence of a well-connected and affluent aristocratic milieu in the first centuries AD, seemingly well positioned to take advantage of the flow of trade through the northern parts of The *Barbaricum*.

At around the time of the end of the 2nd century AD, the abundance of evidence linking Lolland to a wide network of aristocratic connections and exchange seemingly fades away. From the Late Roman Iron Age only a few wealthy burials are known, none of them remotely comparable to the burials near the chiefly centre at Himlingøje on Stevns and its surrounding environs (Lund Hansen 1995, p. 198ff; Grane 2011, p. 105ff). From the whole of Lolland, the only examples where Roman imports have been found in possible graves dated to the Late Roman Iron Age are from the sites Hillested and Toftebys Mark – both the find spot of a glass vessel of type Eggers 230 (Lund Hansen 1987, p. 411). The use of the term 'possible' in this instance stems from the fact that none of these finds were professionally excavated, and therefore doesn't quite meet the standards of documentation required by present-day researchers. However, while there is ample cause to remain doubtful as to the original context of the glass vessels from Hillested and Toftebys Mark, their presence alone does mark the two locations as being points of interest in the flow of trade and exchange in the Late Roman Iron Age.

When measured against the preceding centuries, the conspicuous lack of prestigious goods of Roman origin in the grave material from the Late Roman Iron Age on Lolland is striking. This dichotomy becomes especially apparent when one looks at the diachronic shifts in the distributional densities of Roman imports from Phase B1 to C3 within the area comprising present-day Denmark (i.e. Lund Hansen 1987, Table 2–10). With the finding of the denarius hoards from Tagesgård and Hillested, as well as the several denarii as single-finds, there is, however, cause to look at the island with renewed interest.

While the depositional dates of the denarius hoards from Tagesgård and Hillested are difficult to pinpoint with any degree of accuracy by nature of them being single-type deposits, one should not fail to consider the testimony of the archaeological surveys and excavations conducted in the vicinity of the two sites. In the case of the Tagesgård Hoard, the presence of an Iron Age settlement from the Late Roman period directly underneath the main cluster of denarii from the ploughed-up deposition does serve as a strong indication of them being contemporary. Likewise, the placement of the Hillested Hoard on a site with known grave finds from both the Early and Late Roman Iron Ages, as well as traces of a possible settlement, makes it more than likely that the coins should be situated within the same chronological frame.

The role and function played by the Roman denarii within the context of Scandinavian Iron Age Societies have long puzzled researchers, and this author professes no new enlightenment on the subject. While Roman coins were clearly valued in the Iron Age, it is equally quite apparent that the denarii set themselves apart from the other categories of Roman imports normally found as part of an assemblage of grave-goods, on the site of a settlement or in hack metal deposits. Only a few denarii have ever been found as part of a necklace or other type of jewellery, and the use of Roman coins as a Charon's fee was not widespread (Dyhrfjeld-Johnsen 2011). Even the age-old adage that the denarii probably served as one of the primary sources of silver in the Nordic region during the Roman Iron Age now seems to fail as an adequate explanation, as recent studies show little to no direct correlation between the silver in the denarius coins and the silver in local jewellery and ingots (Horsnæs 2010, p. 189). The apparent desire among the Iron Age population to preserve the denarii in their original form has led some to suggest that the coins could have played a role in the day-to-day trade and exchange of both local and foreign goods (Nielsen 1986, p. 158; Bjerg 2007, p. 122; Horsnæs 2010, p. 188ff). As the denarii are usually found on sites with a known function of centrality or with a connection to

foreign trade such as Gudme on Funen or Dankirke on the west coast of Jutland, and only rarely on the sites of 'ordinary' settlements and single farms, a tentative link to the aristocratic or elite stratum of the Scandinavian Iron Age society does seem highly plausible (e.g. Horsnæs 2006, p. 563; Bjerg 2007, p. 120ff.) The high demand for prestigious foreign objects during the Roman Iron Age would almost certainly imply that something of local origin or manufacture could be traded in return. Whether this was amber or some other material, the traces have in most cases long since disappeared (Brinch 2012). The Roman denarii, by nature of them being a somewhat trustworthy unit of value, might therefore represent one of the only tangible remains of this exchange. The fact that the denarii are usually found near waterways and other nodes of transportation does provide a certain air of feasibility to the hypothesis (e.g. Korthauer 1996, p. 123ff.; Bjerg 2007, p. 113), although this obviously doesn't necessarily equate to the existence of a monetary economy within the Scandinavian Iron Age Society (Horsnæs 2006, p. 563).

This proposed link between the denarii and regional centres possibly functioning as local hubs of trade and redistribution does seem to fit the distributional pattern on Lolland. So far, all the denarius coins from the island have been found inland, along, or very near, natural corridors of transportation. The republican denarius from Kohave, as well as the hoards from Hillested and Tagesgård, was found in close connection to waterways, while the denarii from Søllested were situated in a lowland area from which easy access to the waters of Nakskov Fjord would have been possible during the Iron Age. Lastly, the denarii from Østofte and Erikstrup were all found to the immediate south of the stream of Nældevads Å, in an area also known for other finds from the Roman Iron Age and Early Germanic Iron Age.

The prevalent view is that the majority of denarii found within The *Barbaricum* did not leave The Roman Empire until the time of the 3rd century AD (Horsnæs 2010, p. 186). Except for the singular republican denarius form Kohave, nothing seems to suggest that the depositional dating of the denarii from Lolland deviates from this general trend. The occurrence of the denarii on Lolland should therefore be seen as echoes of events taking place during the 3rd or 4th century AD, during the Late Roman Iron Age and possibly the beginning of the Early Germanic Iron Age. With the finding of the two denarius hoards from Tagesgård and Hillested, as well as a number of denarii as single-finds, the position of the island in this period does appear less diminished than previously believed. As mentioned earlier, denarii are to be counted as part of the same category of imports normally thought to include such artefacts as Roman vessels of bronze and glass as well as foreign jewellery of precious metals or finely crafted glass, although they rarely appear in the same archaeological contexts, e.g. in graves (Lund Hansen 1987, p. 229). However, this difference in find circumstances does not necessarily equate to them circulating in different parts of the Scandinavian Iron Age society. Precious items placed in burials were carefully chosen to highlight the status of the deceased, and thus express a specific narrative chosen by the living. The fact that denarii are rarely found as part of an assemblage of grave-goods perhaps signifies that they were perceived as a means to achieve an end, rather than an end in and of itself.

Conclusions

The recent discovery of the two denarius hoards from Tagesgård and Hillested, as well as several denarii as single-finds on the island of Lolland, provides valuable insight into the networks of exchange and the flow of trade in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. While the denarii do little to change the fact that the islands south of Zealand so far fail to match the wealth found in the Late Roman Iron Age burials in other parts of present-day Denmark, they do prove that the region was still a part of the networks through which foreign Roman imports were brought to Denmark and the Scandinavian Peninsula. Even if the function of the denarii in the Scandinavian Iron Age eludes us, we are left with a better understanding of the specific places where denarius coins were in circulation. The fact that the finding of denarii on Lolland has so far only occurred on sites from which easy access to the ancient northern or southern coastlines was possible tells us that the region was a stepping stone in the Western Baltic Sea during the Late Roman Iron Age.

In sum, while the amount of archaeological evidence linking the island of Lolland to the networks of aristocratic exchange during the Late Roman Iron Age is still scarce, the new denarius hoards and single-finds do outline the contours of the role played by the local settlements and social elite in the Late Roman Iron Age.

Post script. After completing the manuscript for this article three denarii were found near the village of Kettinge on Eastern Lolland. These denarii appear to be part of a hack metal deposit, containing bronze fittings and pieces of bronze and silver vessels from the Roman Iron Age and Early Germanic Iron Age.

Acknowledgements

This author owes a great deal of thanks to Museum Lolland-Falster for providing the time and means necessary for the making and publication of this paper. My extended gratitude also goes towards Helle Horsnæs, curator at the National Museum of Denmark, for providing insightful comments regarding the Roman coins on Lolland. Last but not least, I wish to express my deepest admiration for the local detectorists on the islands of Lolland and Falster. Through their hard work and dedication, our knowledge of the past is being continuously enriched.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes

1. Ten denarii were preserved only as small fragments, leaving no chance of ever reaching a proper identification. The fragmentation did not appear to be intentionally made, and was more likely caused by post-depositional processes. Given the small size of these fragments, one should at least consider the possibility that some might be the shattered remains of a singular denarius, which would then lower the total amount of denarii in the hoard.
2. Personal communication with Helle Horsnæs, curator at the Numismatic Collection at the National Museum of Denmark.
3. Two inhumation graves found during gravel digging – one containing a juvenile individual, the other an adult interred with a piece of Roman glassware of unknown type as well as three gold finger rings – were described by a local teacher in 1875–76. Three inhumation graves found in the early 1870s were unfortunately lost. The presence of cremation graves on the site, some exquisitely furnished, has likewise been attested on several occasions. In 1903, an excavation of a small cluster of urns was conducted by the National Museum of Denmark and in 1911 repeated gravel digging brought to light the remains of two urns, one of which contained the well-preserved bronze fittings from two drinking horns from phase B1 of the Early Roman Iron Age.
4. Authors note: as these two denarii were found during the final stages of the writing of this paper, it has not been possible to conduct a thorough study of them.
5. Four locations with traces of Roman Iron Age and possibly Early Germanic Iron Age settlements are known from the area surrounding Søllested. The references to these in the web-based database, *Fund & Fortidsminder*, by the Danish Cultural Heritage Agency are 070506-6, 7 and 070512-13, 16.

References

Bjerg, L., 2007. *Romerske denarfund fra jyske jernalderbopladser. En arkæologisk kulegravning*. Aarhus Universitetsforlag.

Brinch, M. 2012. *Rav – Nordens guld?* Unpublished master's thesis.

Dyhrfjeld-Johnsen, M.D., 2011. Charon-skik og alternativ brug af romerske mønter. *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 2009, 133–154.

Ethelberg, P., 1990. *Hjemsted 2 – the gravpladser fra 3. & 4. årh. e.Kr. Skrifter fra Museumsrådet for Sønderjyllands Amt, 3*. [Haderslev Museum] Haderslev.

Grane, T., 2011. Zealand and the Roman Empire. *The Iron Age on Zealand. Status and Perspectives*. *In*: L. Boye, ed. *Nordiske Fortidsminder, Series C*. Copenhagen: Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries. Vol. 8, 101–111.

Hansen, U.L., 1987. *Römischer Import im Norden. Warenaustausch zwischen dem Römischen Reich und dem freien Germanien während der Kaizerzeit unter besondere Berücksichtigung Nordeuropas*. København: Nordiske Fortidsminder, Serie B, Bind 10.

Horsnæs, H., 2002. En usædvanlig mønt fra Kohave. *Nordisk Numismatisk Unions Medlemsblad*, (Vol. 5–6), 84–87.

Horsnæs, H., 2006. Roman coins in a Barbarian context. *In*: *Proceedings of the XIII International Congress of Numismatics*. Madrid. 561–565. September 2003.

Horsnæs, H., 2010. Crossing boundaries. An analysis of Roman coins in Danish contexts. Vol. 1. Finds from Sealand, Funen and Jutland. *In*: *Publications from the National Museum, Studies in Archaeology and History*, Vol. 18. Copenhagen: The National Museum of Denmark.

Ilkjær, J., 2002. Danske krigsbytteofringer. In: Lars Jørgensen, Birger Storgaard & Lene Gebaur Thomsen, ed. *Sejrens Triums. Norden i skyggen af det romerske imperium*. Nationalmuseet, 44–65.

Jørgensen, L. and Vang Petersen, P., 1998. *Guld, magt og tro. Danske skattefund fra oldtid og middelalder*. Copenhagen: Nationalmuseet.

Klingenberg, S., 2011. Hoby – a chieftain's residence from the centuries around the birth of Christ. The Iron Age on Zealand. Status and Perspectives. In: L. Boye, ed. *Nordiske Fortidsminder, Series C*. Copenhagen: Royal Society of Northern Antiquaries, Vol. 8, 31–40.

Koch, E., 1986. Kvinden med hornet. *Skalk, Nr*, 6 (1986), 16–17.

Korthauer, C., 1996. En ældre romertidsgrav med guldmønt fra Jylland samt nogle iagttagelser om møntomløb og -funktion i jernalderens Danmark. *Kuml* (1995–96), 125–135.

Lund Hansen, U., 1995. *Himlingøje – seeland – europa. Ein Grabfeld der jüngeren römischen Kaizerzeit auf Seeland, seine Bedeutung und internationalen Beziehungen*. København: Nordiske Fortidsminder, Serie B, Band 13.

Müller, S., 1911. *Juellinge-Fundet og den romerske periode*. København: Nordiske Fortidsminder II, hefte 1.

Nielsen, S., 1986. Denarene fra romersk jernalder – funktion og udbredelse. *Aarbøger for Nordisk Oldkyndighed og Historie*, 1986. 147–164.

Rasmussen, A., 2013. Møntskatten fra Knuthenlund. *Lolland-Falsters Historiske Samfund*, Årbog 2013 – 101. årgang. 41–50.

Schovsbo, P.O., 1987. *Oldtidens vogne i Norden*. Frederikshavn: Bangsbomuseet.