

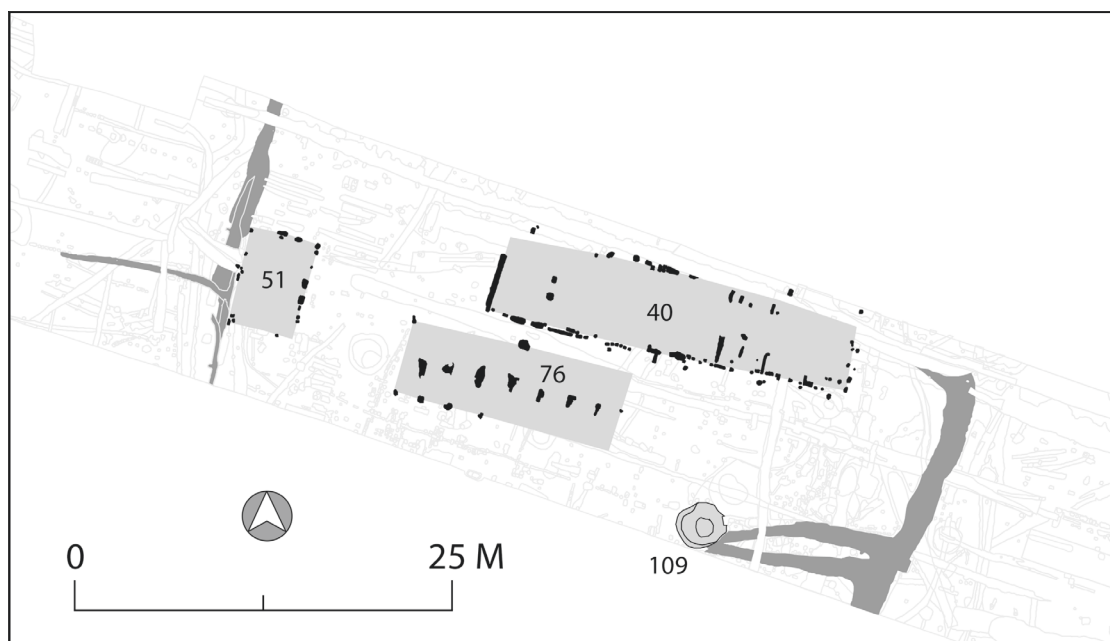
## WODAN'S MYTHICAL BIRDS. SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE ON A SMALL-LONG BROOCH OF THE DOMBURG TYPE FROM HEILOO (PROV. NORTH-HOLLAND / NL)

In 2012, a small copper-alloy brooch of the so-called Domburg type was discovered during excavations by the University of Amsterdam at the village of Heiloo (prov. North-Holland/NL; see **fig. 1**)<sup>1</sup>. The brooch was found in the upper fill of a large pit that had been dug for constructing a well<sup>2</sup>. This well belonged to a partly excavated farmstead, where a farmhouse and some outbuildings were situated (**fig. 2**). Based on pottery finds from its fill, the construction of the well can be dated to the Merovingian period. The farmstead to which the well belonged is dated to c. 675-725, which means that the well was probably dug around 675.

The Heiloo brooch has such a specific shape that it should be seen not only as a functional dress-fastener but also as a highly symbolic item that conveyed a specific symbolic message. It is therefore interesting to unravel what the manufacturer of this object (and his client) had in mind with the chosen form and decoration. This is of particular interest because Heiloo is situated in early-medieval Frisia (**fig. 1**), an area where written sources in the 4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries – the so-called Dark Ages – are limited to a few runic inscriptions.



**Fig. 1** The find location of the Domburg brooch from Heiloo (prov. North-Holland/NL) within the wider context of early-medieval Frisia. The main areas of habitation are shown as »nuclear regions« (with important archaeological sites). – (Drawing J. de Koning).



**Fig. 2** Heiloo (prov. North-Holland/NL). Reconstruction of a partly excavated farmstead, dating to c. 675-725 (phase 3E). The Domburg brooch was found in structure 109, a well that was contemporary to a farmhouse (structure 40) and some outbuildings (structures 51, 76 and perhaps 43). – (Drawing M. F. P. Dijkstra).

Therefore, the world view of its inhabitants can only be understood when we can »read« the symbolic messages on metal objects and other forms of material culture.

Before closely analysing the shape and decoration of the brooch and trying to understand the visual messages it expressed, we shall first describe the brooch in greater detail, offer a summary of current ideas about the dating, distribution and ethnic interpretation of Domburg-type brooches, and present the habitation history of the region where the Heiloo brooch was found: the province of North-Holland. When the Heiloo brooch is placed in the wider context of Scandinavia and the North Sea world, the decorative themes on it can be unravelled and interpreted against the background of the Old Norse religion – by entering the world of Odin, his counterpart Wodan and the deity’s animal helping spirits.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE HEILOO BROOCH

The Heiloo brooch is made of copper-alloy. It was cast in one piece, including the attachment loops for the pin and the needle holder (fig. 3). The foot plate is slightly bent and one of the loops for the spring is partly missing, indicating that the brooch was deposited in a damaged state or lost while its wearer was constructing the well. The overall length of the item is 4.1 cm, its width 1.4 cm.

The body of the brooch consists of three parts: the head plate, the foot plate and a central, connecting bow. The head plate is flat and kidney-shaped. Along the upper edge, in each half of the kidney, a small hole is present, above a *pelta*-shaped cavity. The foot plate is flat and teardrop-shaped. Its lower terminal knob is fashioned as another kidney, smaller but similar in shape to the head plate. In the central part of the foot plate are three cavities, between two holes in its upper part. Two of the cavities are roughly bean-shaped, the third is teardrop-shaped. In the terminal knob, two more holes are present, interconnected by a T-shaped cavity. The head plate and foot plate are connected by a pronounced, solid bow. The bow has oblique sides; the flat front is decorated with two shallow, lengthwise grooves.

**Fig. 3** Drawing and photos of the copper-alloy brooch from Heiloo (prov. North-Holland/NL). The foot plate is slightly bent and one of the loops for the missing spring is broken. – (Drawing J. A. W. Nicolay; collection and © Province of North-Holland). – Scale 2:1.



### DOMBURG BROOCHES: FIRST DATING AND ETHNIC LABEL

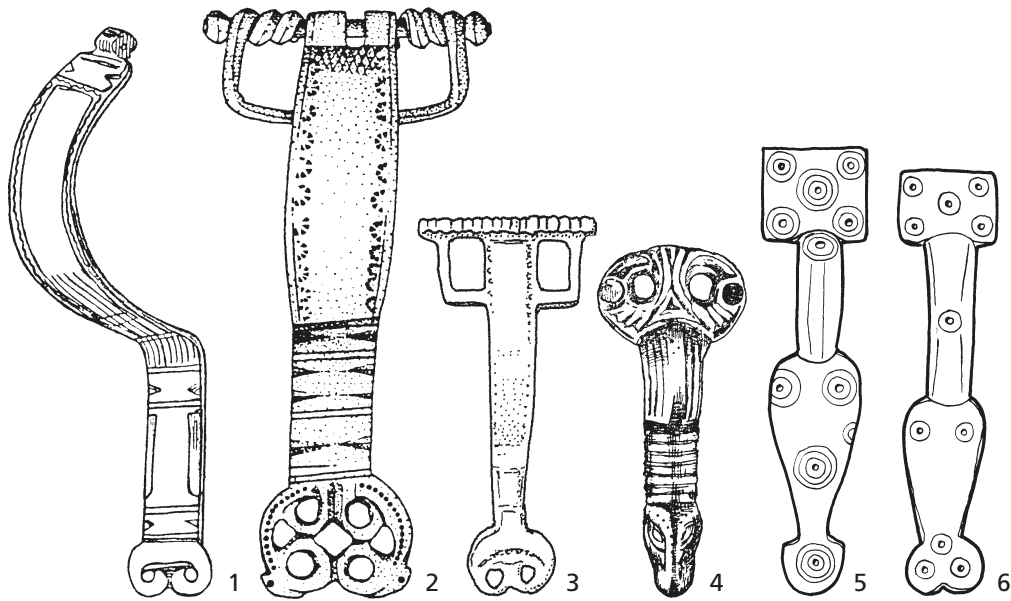
Brooches of the Domburg type form a distinct sub-group within the larger group of so-called small-long brooches. The first research into Domburg brooches, as they are usually called, mainly focussed on the dating and ethnic attribution of this female ornament. Opponents in the discussion about their dating were the Dutch archaeologist (Volgraaf-)Roes and the German archaeologist Werner. Roes believes that the brooches were worn during the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, based on the assumed association of four specimens with Carolingian-period coins and brooches at the early-medieval trading centre near present-day Domburg (prov. Zeeland/NL)<sup>3</sup>. In the kidney-shaped head plate and terminal of the foot plate, she recognised pairs of stylized bird's heads with curved beaks, in her opinion eagles, which had degenerated into spirals<sup>4</sup>.

According to Werner, the bird's heads suggest an earlier dating, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>5</sup>. Similar animal heads are present on copper-alloy *Armbrustfibeln* with kidney-shaped terminals (nowadays assigned to type Ozingell<sup>6</sup>; **fig. 4, 1-2**), dating to the late 5<sup>th</sup> and early decades of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and found in England, Sweden and Thuringia in Central Germany. Within Thuringia, the brooches of the Ozingell type influenced the development of bow brooches with kidney-shaped head plates, showing two nicely shaped bird's heads with curved beaks (**fig. 4, 4**)<sup>7</sup>. Werner believes that these silver-gilt exemplars directly inspired the decoration of the simpler, copper-alloy Domburg brooches.

According to Roes, the Domburg brooches are executed in a »Frisian style«, typical of the coastal area of early-medieval Frisia<sup>8</sup>. This ethnic label was also given by Werner, who regarded the ornaments as a specifically »Frisian form« with Thuringian predecessors<sup>9</sup>.

### A SYSTEMATIC INVENTORY OF DOMBURG BROOCHES

The most comprehensive study of Domburg brooches is the unpublished master thesis by Botman<sup>10</sup>. For the first time, she made a systematic inventory of all known Domburg brooches, which by their shape and decoration are assigned to five types (types I-V, with sub-types). The earliest form, showing Animal Style I



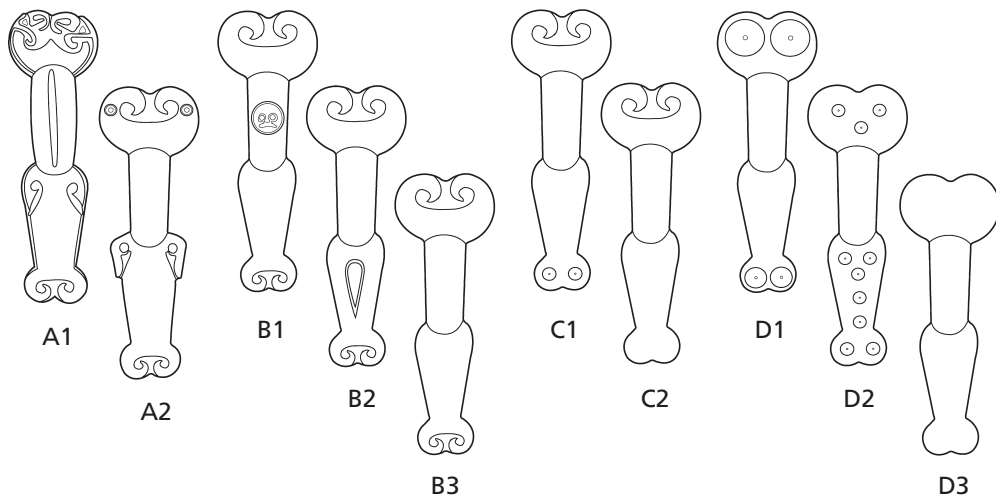
**Fig. 4** Various brooch forms related to Domburg brooches: **1** Ozingell, type Ozingell (Kent/GB). – **2** Erding-Altenerding (D). – **3** Hogebeintum, variant type Ozingell (prov. Friesland/NL). – **4** Gammertingen, »Thuringian« type (Lkr. Sigmaringen/D). – **5-6** Wijinaldum, small-long brooches of »Frisian« type (prov. Friesland/NL). – (1-2 after Schulze-Dörrlamm 1986, fig. 27; 3 drawing H. J. M. Burgers; 4 after Werner 1955, fig. 1; 5-6 drawings J. de Koning). – Scale 1:1.

birds' heads with curved beaks on the head plate and more stylized birds' heads on the terminal knob of the foot plate, is considered the prototype of Domburg brooches. The younger exemplars, being copies and imitations of this prototype, show more degenerated birds' heads, point-circles reminiscent of these birds' heads, or no decoration at all. Based on this typology, a new division of Domburg brooches is presented in **figure 5**, in a similar way showing a gradual degeneration of the birds' heads that first appeared on the head plate of Botman's prototype (now type A1)<sup>11</sup>.

Interestingly, some of the brooches show not only (stylized) birds' heads on the head plate and terminal of the foot plate but also another animal, human or more abstract motifs. Below each »shoulder« of the foot plate, a comma-shaped decoration may be present, suggesting degenerated heads of two further birds (types A1-2). Other brooches show a human face within a roundel, in the centre of the connecting bow (type B1), or an almond-shaped motif on the foot plate (type B2).

Botman dates Domburg brooches to the 6<sup>th</sup>, as well as to the 7<sup>th</sup> century<sup>12</sup>. A somewhat shorter dating range between the mid 6<sup>th</sup> and late 7<sup>th</sup> century is supported by finds from closed contexts (grave and settlement finds), including some recent discoveries<sup>13</sup>. Although individual (sub-)types are difficult to date, their moment of production probably relates to the degree of degeneration displayed by the birds' heads: clearly recognizable birds' heads may date to the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century (type A1); the strongly stylized heads and the kidney-shaped parts without remnants of such heads, to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> century (types B-D). Unfortunately, no context dating is available for the only mould that is currently known for producing Domburg brooches, found in two fragments at Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer (prov. Utrecht/NL)<sup>14</sup>. Because the imprint in the mould is showing the backside of a head plate, the specific brooch type cannot be established.

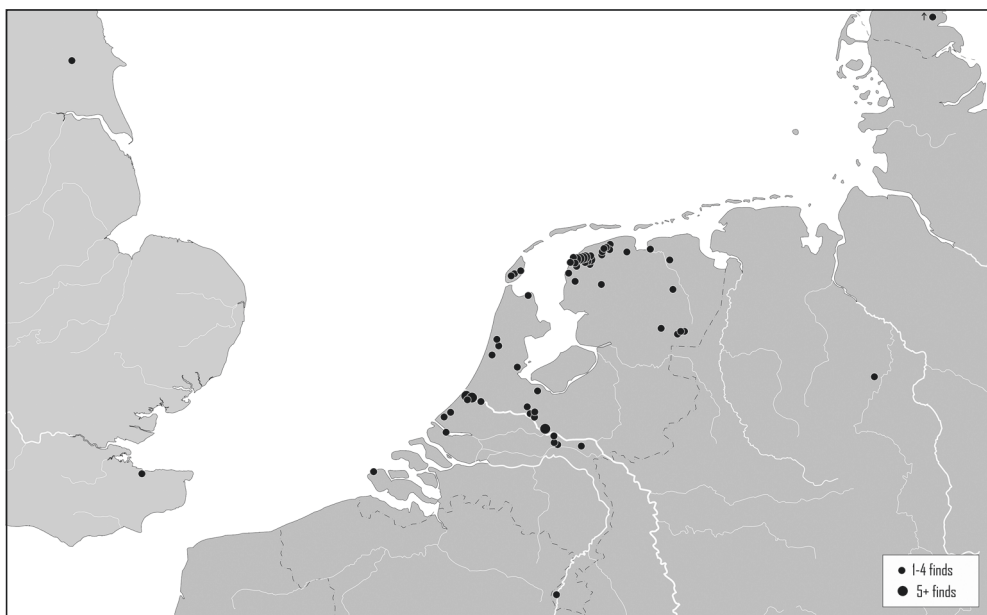
Domburg brooches have a very distinct distribution, which is supported by recent metal-detector finds from »Portable Antiquities of the Netherlands«: with a few exceptions from surrounding areas, they are only discovered in the Dutch coastal area, including the adjacent part of the Dutch central river area (**fig. 6**). Brooches of specific types are found across this area, without showing clustering of regional or local variants. The only exception is a small group of relatively late, deviating exemplars (Botman's type V), only



**Fig. 5** Typology of Domburg brooches, largely based on the unpublished typology by Botman (1994, 16). – (Drawings J. A. W. Nicolay). – Not to scale.

discovered in a limited part of the eastern Netherlands. Because most Domburg brooches are known from present-day Friesland, Botman agrees with Roes and Werner that they indeed represent a distinct, Frisian type<sup>15</sup>. The large number of finds from Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer, including the prototype, several younger types and the unique mould, may also point to the Dutch central river area as a key region for the development of Domburg brooches<sup>16</sup>.

Recently, a different perspective on the ethnic interpretation of Domburg brooches has been suggested: instead of linking them to the expression of differences between »Frisians« and surrounding peoples, Dijkstra regards them as items with »an integrating function, worn for regional and local observers«<sup>17</sup>. The distribution pattern is related to settlements where women lived who married within or across the »Frisian« coastal regions. Some isolated Domburg brooches, found at Liebenau (Lkr. Nienburg-Weser/D), Maastricht (prov. Limburg/NL), Faversham (Kent/GB), Wharram Percy (Yorkshire/GB) and Stavnsager (Jutland/DK), demonstrate how such regional networks of marriage relations were embedded in larger networks<sup>18</sup>.



**Fig. 6** Geographical distribution of Domburg brooches, including all types. Number of finds: 227. Inventory closed in September 2019. – (Data after Botman 1994 and Heeren/van der Feijst 2017, with new finds, mainly from Portable Antiquities of the Netherlands; map J. A. W. Nicolay).

## HABITATION HISTORY: NORTH-HOLLAND IN THE 4<sup>TH</sup>-7<sup>TH</sup> CENTURIES

From prehistoric times onwards, the present-day province of North-Holland was quite densely populated<sup>19</sup>. The conditions for habitation were remarkably favourable, not only in some Pleistocene areas, like the island of Texel and the former island of Wieringen, and on the beach barriers along the North Sea coast, but also in the former estuary of the river Oer-IJ. From the Late Iron Age and Roman Iron Age especially, a large number of settlement sites are known. When the Romans first came to this part of Europe in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, they must have witnessed a flourishing population of mainly cattle farmers, living in an area with good conditions for agriculture as well as stock-breeding. The inhabitants of these areas were labelled »Frisii« (Frisians) by Roman writers, such as Tacitus<sup>20</sup>.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> century to the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, North-Holland was situated just outside the northwestern border of the Roman Empire. From archaeological and historical sources we know that in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the earlier, prosperous situation changed dramatically: many sites were abandoned and people seem to have moved to other areas in Northwestern Europe<sup>21</sup>. After c. 300-325, the region of North-Holland, like the neighbouring provinces of Friesland to the east and South-Holland to the south, was largely uninhabited; it is believed that only a small population remained in the coastal area, at least in Friesland<sup>22</sup> and South-Holland<sup>23</sup>. For South-Holland it has been calculated that the population fell by c. 90 %, from 10,000-15,000 to »maybe a few hundred«<sup>24</sup>. From around 475, the population of the Dutch west coast was growing again, partly as a result of migration; however, it was not to return to the Roman Iron Age level until late-medieval times.

The material culture of the early-medieval inhabitants of the Dutch coastal area is very different from the cultural expression of the earlier, Roman-period inhabitants, as metal finds and especially hand-made pottery demonstrate<sup>25</sup>. What kind of people were these »new Frisians«, with their new cultural forms? In contrast to the coastal area of Friesland, there is no evidence for the arrival of late 4<sup>th</sup>- and 5<sup>th</sup>-century »Anglo-Saxons«, since cruciform brooches and pottery of so-called Anglo-Saxon type of this period are completely lacking in North-Holland and also in South-Holland<sup>26</sup>. The archaeological sources suggest that the Migration- and Merovingian-period people of the western Netherlands had a different and more heterogeneous background. Most probably, a residual population from the area itself (the so-called Old Frisians) was supplemented by »Franks« from the central riverine area, by »new Frisians« from the northern coastal area, and perhaps by several »Anglo-Saxons« from England<sup>27</sup>.

Within the coastal area of early-medieval Frisia, both the size of the residual population and the origin of groups of newcomers, at least during the 5<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, resulted in different cultural orientations of the people living on either side of the river Vlie (the natural border between North-Holland and Friesland; see **fig. 1**). The »new Frisians« of the northern coastal area were strongly focussed on the »northern« world, that is their »Saxon« homeland and southern Scandinavia. This is most clearly reflected in the execution of luxury items, such as silver supporting-arm and equal-armed brooches of »Saxon style« (late 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century) and gold bracteates of »Scandinavian style« (late 5<sup>th</sup>-first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>28</sup>. Southwest of the Vlie, cross-bow brooches and hairpins, wheel-thrown pottery and the construction of axial-post rather than aisled houses in the same period point to a different, southern orientation, towards the late-Roman Empire and its Frankish successor kingdom<sup>29</sup>.

It is not before the late 5<sup>th</sup> century that »Anglo-Saxon« pottery is also found southwest of the Vlie, in North-Holland, South-Holland and the central Dutch river area; the only »Anglo-Saxon« cruciform brooches from the western Netherlands, discovered at Katwijk (prov. South-Holland/NL) and Wieringen (prov. North-Holland/NL), can also be dated to the late 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century<sup>30</sup>. Whether the appearance of such finds relates to the arrival of people from Friesland or perhaps southern England, is hard to tell. They demonstrate, how-

ever, that by then the coastal area of the western Netherlands was part not only of the Frankish but also of the North Sea cultural sphere. It is within this transitional zone between the Frankish world to the south and the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian world to the west and north that Domburg brooches, like the find from Heiloo, were produced and worn.

## DECIPHERING SYMBOLIC MESSAGES THAT ARE UNFAMILIAR TO US

Despite all obvious problems inherent in an ethnic interpretation of specific forms of material culture, the study of Domburg brooches has usually focussed on their significance as an ethnic marker for the »Frisian« inhabitants of the early-medieval Dutch coastal area. By contrast, no attempt has been made so far to understand the cultural, symbolic background of the design of such brooches and their ornamental motifs. The »reading« of such messages has proved extremely difficult for various reasons:

1. The symbolic language embodies a cultural-historical and religious-mythical world that was almost completely obliterated by the advent of Christianity, and for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century researcher is therefore difficult to understand.
2. The interpretation of symbolic messages, at least on the Continent and in Britain, is not supported by a proper collection of written sources. The main written sources that may provide some insight are the 13<sup>th</sup>-century *Edda*, written by the Icelander Snorri Sturluson, and a collection of poems in the contemporary *Poetic Edda*. Their value for an interpretation of artistic expressions beyond Scandinavia has until now been assessed with caution, although some attempts have been made to interpret the complex visual messages on early-medieval material culture in the context of Norse mythology<sup>31</sup>.
3. Other historical references to pagan practices and ways of thinking are extremely rare<sup>32</sup>.
4. The symbolic language on brooches and other forms of material culture tends to be very subtle, highly symbolic and ambiguous. This language can only be read when the composition and all individual elements of the object's shape and decoration are properly understood.

As a result, reconstructing pre-Christian belief systems remains difficult, even in Scandinavia, where the spread of Christianity took place centuries later than on the Continent and in Britain. All attempts to read and interpret the symbolic language on material culture should therefore be seen as 21<sup>st</sup>-century constructions. However, by combining the available historical and especially archaeological sources, an attempt will be made here to trace elements of the symbolic language that was »spoken« in the pre-Christian North Sea world, as a basis for understanding the symbolic message(s) that seem to be present on the Heiloo brooch.

## DOMBURG BROOCHES AND THEIR RELATION TO SCANDINAVIAN-STYLE BROOCHES

Domburg brooches represent a final stage in the development of Scandinavian-style brooches, that had their origin in the early 5<sup>th</sup> century. Inspired by the chip-carved decoration on late-Roman belt-fittings, metalworkers in Scandinavia started producing brooches in the so-called Nydam Style<sup>33</sup>. Shortly after the mid 5<sup>th</sup> century, these ornaments were gradually replaced by closely related brooches, now executed in Animal Style I<sup>34</sup>. Instead of late-Roman-style geometric and plant motifs, animals or animal-like creatures became more dominant. Moreover, human faces are frequently shown, usually flanked by animals – a motif that had its origin in representations of Poseidon or Oceanos with helping animals (dolphins or sea lions) on late-Roman belt-fittings<sup>35</sup>. Within the Scandinavian group of Style I brooches, Haseloff assigns the oldest specimens to his »Jutlandic brooch group«<sup>36</sup>. These exemplars also became popular in the southern North

Sea area, where imitations and later copies (including type Tournai) gradually developed into 6<sup>th</sup>-century, regional brooch types<sup>37</sup>. One of these regional types found only in Friesland and labelled type Achlum, inspired the production of Domburg brooches further down the Dutch North Sea coast.

This development, from imitating Scandinavian brooches to producing regional-style brooches, can be illustrated by briefly describing the design and decoration of three magnificent, silver-gilt specimens: a square-headed brooch from Kent (Style I, early type Tournai), a square-headed brooch from Friesland (Style I, later type Tournai) and a disc-on-bow brooch from Friesland (type Achlum).

### **Bifrons (Kent / GB), late 5<sup>th</sup> or first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century**

This brooch, found in a richly furnished inhumation grave, has a rectangular head plate and a more or less teardrop-shaped foot plate; they are connected by a bow, which has a disc on the front (**fig. 7**)<sup>38</sup>. The head plate is divided into a rectangular inner zone, on three sides surrounded by an outer zone. The outer zone shows four quadrupeds, with gaping mouths. The central zone shows a highly stylized human head of a male figure with a moustache and beard. The head is flanked by two creatures with curved, bird-like beaks.

The foot plate shows a more complex composition. Its different elements are emphasized by small holes. The central rhombus, with a four-pointed cross in the centre, is surrounded by a wide outer rim, filled with three animals, two human heads that are displayed in profile and a third human head that is represented frontally. The heads and animals alternate, forming three sets of a man between animals. At the top and bottom points of the rhombus, animal heads are shown from above, the upper of which is flanked by bird-like creatures with a curved body, terminating in a head with a pointed, curved beak. A roundel is present on either side of the rhombus, filled with a human face that is shown frontally. Four quadrupeds are added as bordering animals, with their heads pointing towards the roundels. Together with the human heads within these roundels, they form two more sets of a man between animals.

The central bow bears a large roundel, with a stylized human head in frontal view. The parallel lines of the chin may again represent a beard. This head should be seen in relation to the curved animals directly below the roundel, on the »shoulders« of the foot plate, forming the seventh man between animals.

### **Vicinity of Holwerd (prov. Friesland / NL), first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century**

This metal-detector find from a rural settlement site near Holwerd is similar in shape to the Bifrons brooch but relatively small (**fig. 8, 1**)<sup>39</sup>. The head plate is divided into three zones, framed by a narrow band. The central zone shows some apparently random geometrical motifs. Together, however, these form a highly stylized human head with a beard. Both outer zones show a quadruped, again in a stylized way. Between the bent legs of these animals, a comb-like motif probably represents the animal's belly; the elongated triangular shapes seem to be the animal's hair or manes.

The centre of the foot plate bears a rhombic motif, with a four-pointed star in the centre. On both sides and at the bottom of the rhombus a roundel is present, again with a four-pointed star at the centre. Two more roundels adorn the upper part of the foot plate. They represent animals that are facing outwards, with heads that consist of three parts: a triangle with parallel grooves (indicating hair or feathers), a large round eye below an eyebrow and an elongated, bird-like beak that is curved inwards.

The flat front of the connecting bow displays some heavily abraded motifs, together forming a second human head, now shown in profile. Above two horizontal lines on the left, representing lips, a central, oval eye





**Fig. 7** Photo and drawing of the silver-gilt square-headed brooch from Bifrons (Kent/GB), grave 41. – (Collection and © The Kent Archaeological Society/Maidstone Museum; drawing after Haseloff 1981, fig. 25). – Scale 1:1.

is visible within the semi-circular outline of the head. Left of the eye, a stylized nose is shown as a terminal knob of the outline.

### **Achlum (prov. Friesland / NL), probably mid 6<sup>th</sup> century**

This brooch is the only intact specimen (fig. 8, 2) of a uniform group of six brooches, all discovered at rural settlements in Friesland<sup>40</sup>. The only finds outside Friesland are two copper-alloy imitations, discovered with a metal detector on Wieringen (fig. 8, 3) and at Katwijk-Zanderij<sup>41</sup>. The Achlum brooch too is relatively small. It has the usual rectangular head plate, connected to a teardrop-shaped foot plate by a raised bow, now bearing a disc. The head plate shows a strongly stylized human face. On both sides of the nose, an eye with an eyebrow can be identified; the nose terminates in a semi-circular mouth with a probable moustache. The ribbon-like hair on both sides of the head merges into S-shaped motifs that at the same time represent highly stylized animals. Two more animals decorate the foot plate's shoulders. Their heads are pointing downwards, with the bird-like beaks curved inwards. As a new element, the foot plate has a kidney-shaped



**Fig. 8** Two silver-gilt square-headed brooches from the vicinity of Holwerd (1) and from Achlum (2) (both prov. Friesland/NL). The copper-alloy fragment (3) from Wieringen (prov. North-Holland/NL) is part of a brooch similar to the specimen from Achlum. – (1 collection Museum Dokkum, © F. de Vries, Toonbeeld; 2 collection and © Fries Museum, Leeuwarden; 3 private collection, © photo R. A. van Eerden). – 1-2 scale 2:1; 3 length 2.0 cm, width 1.2 cm.

terminal, formed by two opposing bird's heads. On the disc, no human face is depicted; the animals on the shoulders of the foot plate flank a plain roundel.

Despite differences in the design of these three brooches, it is remarkable how similar the themes of their decoration are. Both human faces and (hybrid) animals are shown, often forming sets of a man and two flanking animals. On all specimens, birds with curved beaks take a prominent place, forming the shoulders of the foot plate. It is more difficult to tell what types of animals are represented by the four-legged creatures on the head plate and foot plate of the Bifrons brooch. The central head on the upper part of the foot plate might be a horse, an interpretation that is quite plausible for the animals with hair or manes on the Holwerd head plate. The quadrupeds flanking the human head in the central part of the Bifrons head plate have bird's heads and are hybrid creatures; the bordering animals on the head plate and foot plate may be horses or wolves. On other »Jutlandic« brooches, not presented here, also hybrid animals with human heads can be seen<sup>42</sup>.

A new element on the Achlum-type brooches are the opposing bird's heads at the end of the foot plate, a regional characteristic that can also be seen on Domburg brooches. When the »hanging birds« and »curved

hanging birds	curved birds
1. Nydam Style brooches: 5 <sup>th</sup> century	1. Sösdale Style horse gear: late 4 <sup>th</sup> to the first half of the 5 <sup>th</sup> century
2. »Jutlandic« brooches and imitations: mid 5 <sup>th</sup> to mid 6 <sup>th</sup> century	2. Ozingell-type brooches: third quarter of the 5 <sup>th</sup> to the early 6 <sup>th</sup> century
3. Achlum-type brooches: mid 6 <sup>th</sup> century	3a. »Thuringian« brooches: late 5 <sup>th</sup> to the first quarter of the 6 <sup>th</sup> century 3b. Achlum-type brooches: mid 6 <sup>th</sup> century
4. Domburg brooches: second half of the 6 <sup>th</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> century	4. Domburg brooches: second half of the 6 <sup>th</sup> to 7 <sup>th</sup> century

**Tab. 1** The chronological development of »hanging birds« versus »curved birds«, in consecutive styles of ornamentation and brooch types.

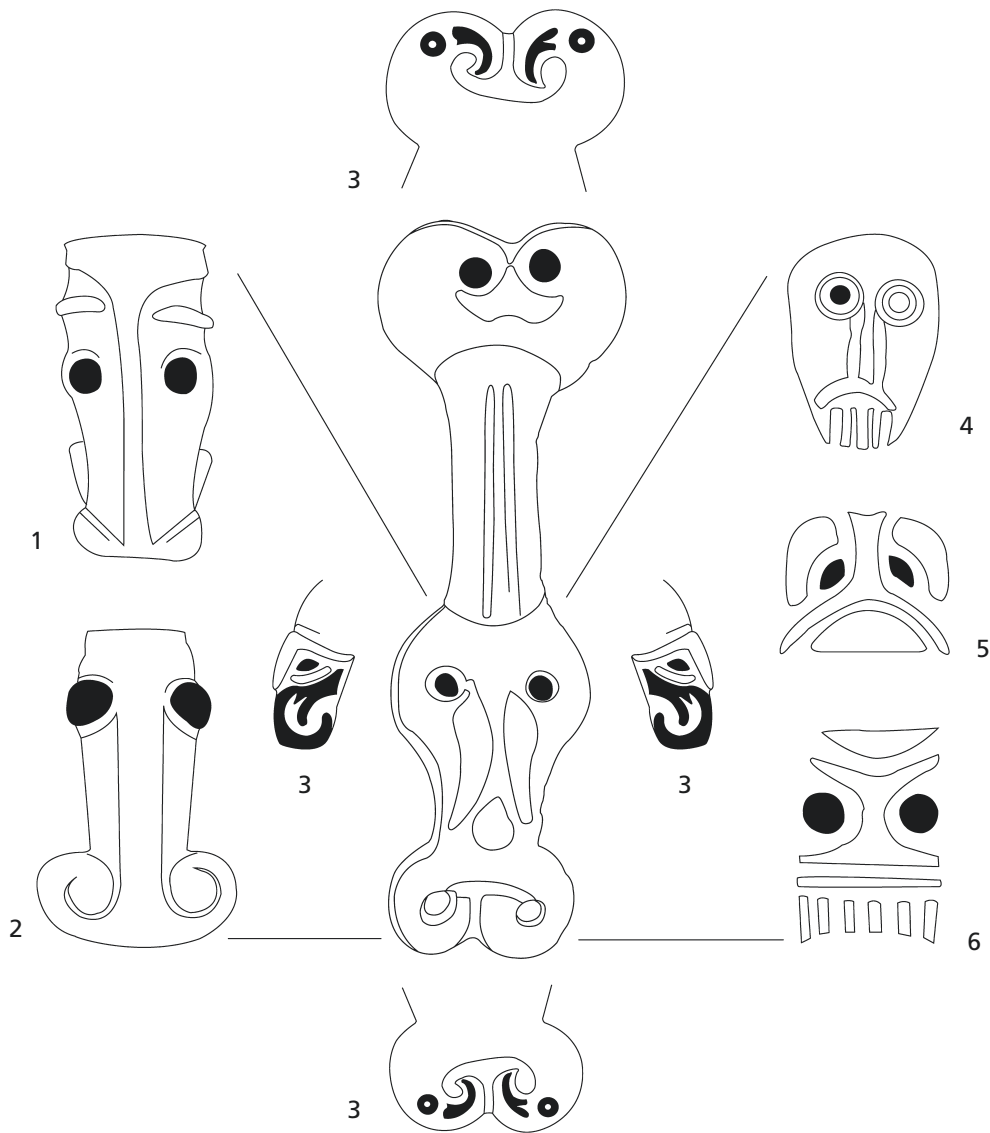
birds« on the brooch from Achlum and the Domburg brooches are compared, it is obvious that the design of the latter imitates that of Achlum-type brooches. While the currently known brooches of type Achlum – like the »Jutlandic« specimens – are executed in gilded silver and probably were worn by members of the regional elite, the much larger group of Domburg brooches are all executed in copper-alloy, sometimes decorated with tinning, and will have been used more widely among the coastal population of early-medieval Frisia.

## SEQUENCE OF CULTURAL INFLUENCES AND RELATED CHRONOLOGY

According to Werner, the kidney-shaped head plate and the terminal of the foot plate of Domburg brooches were inspired by the kidney-shaped head plates of silver-gilt »Thuringian« brooches<sup>43</sup> (fig. 4, 4), dating to c. 490-530<sup>44</sup>. Although a stylistic relation between these ornaments is obvious, it is more probable that the brooches of type Ozingell (fig. 4, 1-2), dating to c. 470-520<sup>45</sup>, should be seen as the actual prototype.

The basic shape of this prototype can be traced back to the 4<sup>th</sup>- and 5<sup>th</sup>-century *Armbrustfibeln mit festem Nadelhalter*, which have their origin in central Germany and Poland<sup>46</sup>. Under the influence of kidney-shaped horse gear pendants from Eastern Europe and Scandinavia, shaped as opposing, curved birds' heads in the Sösdale Style and dating to c. 375-450<sup>47</sup>, a kidney-shaped terminal was added to some of these brooches in central Germany in the third quarter of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. It is these brooches of the Ozingell type that inspired the development of regional-style brooches both in Thuringia and in Friesland, where during the late 5<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century two distinctive types of silver-gilt brooches with a kidney-shaped decoration were manufactured in Animal Style I (»Thuringian« brooches and Achlum-type brooches). Only along the Dutch coastal regions did this motif survive the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century, as a typical decoration of Domburg brooches.

Interestingly, a brooch closely related to those of type Ozingell was found as an old heirloom in combination with a Domburg brooch in a 6<sup>th</sup>-century inhumation grave at Hogebeintum (prov. Friesland/NL, grave 130; fig. 4, 3). This find is important evidence that such a German prototype indeed was available in the Dutch coastal area by that time. Here, the kidney-shaped set of birds' heads was added to the repertoire of designs known from »Jutlandic« brooches, giving birth to the Achlum-type and the later Domburg brooch – first showing birds' heads in Animal Style I; later as degenerated, spiral-shaped motifs. While the silver-gilt Achlum-type brooches find their origin in Friesland, the Domburg brooches may have seen their development outside Friesland, as the exemplars from Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer suggest. If the proposed sequence of cultural influences is correct, the chronological order in **table 1** can be established for the origin of »hanging birds« and »curved birds«, as they appear on Domburg brooches.



**Fig. 9** The Heiloo brooch surrounded by decorative motifs that help to explain the symbolism of its shape and decoration. The motifs originate from: **1** cruciform brooch from Westerwijtwerd (prov. Groningen/NL). – **2** cruciform brooch from Achlum (prov. Friesland/NL). – **3. 5** disc-on-bow brooch from Achlum (prov. Friesland/NL; see also **fig. 8, 2**). – **4** mushroom-shaped part of a buckle tongue from Elsflëth (Lkr. Wesermasch/D; see also **fig. 12**). – **6** square-headed brooch from the vicinity of Holwerd (prov. Friesland/NL; see also **fig. 8, 1**). Human eyes and bird's beaks are marked in black. – (Drawings J. A. W. Nicolay). – Not to scale.

In their basic shape, Domburg brooches represent one specific form of small-long brooches. Based on the combination of specific shapes for the head plate and the foot plate, these ornaments are assigned to six main types (types I-VI), including the Domburg brooches (type V)<sup>48</sup>. Inspired by early cruciform brooches, the first small-long brooches with a typical, cruciform head plate were produced in northern Germany during the 5<sup>th</sup> century<sup>49</sup>. With the migration of the »Anglo-Saxons«, this brooch form also spread to the northern Netherlands and England. In the late 5<sup>th</sup> and the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the development of various regional types can be seen all along the North Sea coast, each giving expression to some form of regional identity<sup>48</sup>. The youngest type to develop were the Domburg brooches, as successors to the »Frisian« small-long brooches with a rectangular head plate and a teardrop-shaped foot plate (**fig. 4, 5**). The foot plate of some of these ornaments has a kidney-shaped terminal, which supports the idea that Domburg brooches indeed belong to the wider group of small-long brooches (**fig. 4, 6**).

## DECORATIVE MOTIFS ON THE HEILOO BROOCH

What makes the Heiloo brooch such an exceptional piece among the currently known Domburg brooches is that its symbolic language is designed more explicitly than usual. Examining the ornament from head to foot, we find a complex pattern of decorative motifs (fig. 9). The head plate consists of two comma-shaped motifs, on either side of a central cavity, together forming the shape of a kidney with two holes in it. The head plate represents two stylized bird's heads, in opposing positions, as also seen on the disc-on-bow brooch from Achlum. The shape of the head plate at the same time represents a human face, with the holes forming the person's eyes. When taken together, these motifs show a man between animals.

The foot plate shows two pairs of holes, one below the foot plate's shoulders and a second in its terminal knob. The kidney shape can be interpreted as another pair of bird's heads. Instead of the usual, bean-shaped cavities on other Domburg brooches, in this case only the upper holes relate to »hanging birds«, which are more clearly visible on the Achlum brooch (fig. 9, 2).

An exceptional feature of the Heiloo brooch are the cavities in the central part of the foot plate, linking both sets of holes. If indeed the upper holes represent eyes, not only of birds but also of yet another human face, the elongated, symmetrical cavities form this person's nose. The nose ends in a teardrop-shaped cavity, at the place where a mouth is expected to be found. A remarkable parallel to this feature appears on a Domburg brooch from Wijnaldum (prov. Friesland/NL; fig. 10, 1): below two engraved eyes and a central, almond-shaped motif, a similar visualization of a nose and mouth can be seen. The depiction of a human face is engraved less meticulously on a recently discovered Domburg brooch from Monster (prov. South-Holland/NL; fig. 10, 2): below the eyes, within an engraved head, the elongated nose can be seen in a more pronounced way. If the interpretation as a human face is correct, the kidney-shaped terminal may represent the moustache of the male head that is depicted. The entire foot plate at the same time represents an animal head (most likely, a horse), seen from above, if we consider both sides of the kidney shape to be nostrils with holes in them. Similar animal heads are especially well known from late 4<sup>th</sup>- to mid 6<sup>th</sup>-century cruciform brooches<sup>51</sup>, sometimes with clearly curved nostrils. Moreover, differently shaped animal heads, as foot plate terminals, are typical of continental bow brooches<sup>52</sup>, including the already mentioned brooches of »Thuringian« type (fig. 4, 4).

Finally, the Heiloo brooch as a whole shows a standing human figure: the head plate is its face, the bow its neck, the foot plate its body and legs, and the terminal knob its feet. A very similar image appears when the famous belt buckle from the princely grave at Morken (Rhein-Erft-Kreis/D), dating to c. 600, is placed with



**Fig. 10** Two Domburg brooches with a foot plate decoration that is closely related to the Heiloo brooch. The brooches are metal-detector finds from Wijnaldum (1) (prov. Friesland/NL) and Monster (2) (prov. South-Holland/NL). – (Private collections; © photo J. A. W. Nicolay and Portable Antiquities of the Netherlands [PAN]. The brooches are registered as PAN-00053148 and PAN-00051092). – Scale 2:1.



**Fig. 11** Belt buckle, worn by the »Chieftain of Morken« (Rhein-Erft-Kreis/D), an adult male who was buried in a richly furnished chamber grave around 600. The buckle is made of iron and decorated with a standing male figure and animals in silver and brass inlay. – (Collection and © LVR-LandesMuseum Bonn). – Scale 1:1.

the buckle-loop facing up (fig. 11)<sup>53</sup>. The buckle prong is decorated with the face of a male person (wearing a moustache), who has two opposing birds' heads forming his hair. The buckle plate can be seen as this person's body, with both arms (at the same time forming two more bird's heads) hanging down. Finally, a large animal head seen from above makes up his feet.

For the symbolic message(s) on the Heiloo brooch to be readable to any observer, it is important to know how Domburg brooches were worn on the female body. Useful evidence is available for just one specimen, found in an inhumation grave at Oosterbeintum (prov. Friesland/NL, grave 428). The grave contained the skeleton of a female, aged 25-35 and probably buried in a dugout coffin<sup>54</sup>. Her grave goods were some glass and rock crystal beads, a Domburg brooch and two annular brooches. The Domburg brooch was found below the chin, positioned diagonally with the head plate up; the annular brooches were discovered on the right shoulder. Although the original position at the time of burial cannot be established exactly, the documentation is clear enough to assume that the Domburg brooch from Oosterbeintum was worn with the head plate up along one side of the chin. We disagree with Heeren and van der Feijst who argue that early-medieval bow brooches were worn with the head plate down, which would make the symbolic design unreadable<sup>55</sup>.

## AN ATTEMPT TO »READ« THE SYMBOLIC LANGUAGE OF THE HEILOO BROOCH

The starting point for interpreting the iconography of the Heiloo brooch are the various decorative themes represented on Scandinavian-type ornaments that in their design and/or symbolism are closely related to Domburg brooches. On the Nydam-Style and »Jutlandic« brooches, as well as on the »Frisian« brooches of the Achlum type, the image of a bearded head between various kinds of animals (probably birds and horses or wolves) is a recurring theme<sup>56</sup>.

A traditional interpretation of such human and animal figures is that they give a specific object a magical, protective character<sup>57</sup>. This interpretation has also been applied to Domburg brooches; especially the presence of »masks« on the bow of some of these brooches would have given a »protective, phylacteric power«<sup>58</sup>. However, the actual reading of the complex symbolic language on Migration- and early-Merovingian-period ornaments, except for the life-long work by Hauck, has received little attention among archaeologists<sup>59</sup>. We fully agree with Pesch that the images on jewellery and other objects were meant to be read and understood by the observer and that the analysis of such images – alongside the study of

artefacts and texts – should be a third pillar below the reconstruction of traditions, customs and ideas of past communities<sup>60</sup>.

The symbolic meaning of »Jutlandic« and related brooches, including those from Bifrons and Achlum, was studied by Olsen<sup>61</sup>. Her interpretation of the man-between-animals motif is based on the Old Norse literature dealing with the pre-Christian religion. The male person is seen as Odin (or his counterpart Wodan), head of the Norse pantheon and king of the Asir gods. He is flanked by two familiars or helping spirits, embodied as horses, wolves or birds, the birds probably representing Odin's ravens Huginn (»thought«) and Munin (»mind«). These animals had the capacity not only to prophesy but also to enter the world of the dead. The human-animal hybrids on some of the brooches and also on bracteates are thought to represent Odin in different stages of his transformation into an animal so that he himself could enter the Otherworld. The prominent roundels on the foot plate of some brooches might represent the three mythological springs that well up below Yggdrasil, the mythological world tree; depicted as the (rhombic) central part of such foot plates, this tree connects the individual roundels to the sky (the bow joining head- and foot plate), thus creating an image of the Old Norse cosmos.

The association of the male heads on brooches, bracteates and other Scandinavian-style ornaments with Odin is also suggested by Hedeager<sup>62</sup>. As a shaman, Odin was capable of joining entities in the supernatural world, through the state of ecstasy or soul journey. The animals that are shown in relation to Odin should therefore be seen as his helping spirits, or as transformations of his soul after it left the body. Most of these animals are interpreted as snakes, eagles, ravens, wild boars, wolves and bears. According to Hedeager, these »wild, powerful and aggressive animals« are the species into which Odin could convert, or that might escort him to the Otherworld<sup>63</sup>.

The importance of shamanistic practices in the pre-Christian Germanic world is supported by Seebold's study of the iconography of gold bracteates of types A and C<sup>64</sup>. The most important animals on these bracteates are birds and horses. The birds are depicted as complete animals with their beaks pointing towards the human head, and as part of the person's headdress or clothing; it is assumed that these animals are speaking to this person, making a prophecy. The horses, some with their mouths open and tongues lolling, are interpreted similarly. Although Seebold believes that idealized kings in their role as political and sacral leaders are depicted, the ability not only to transform into but also to communicate with animals is typical of Odin. Other elements that mark this deity are the »thumb of knowledge«, and the very specific way his face is shown: with open mouth and pronounced cheeks, exhaling a »healing breath« or a »breath of life« – symbolizing Odin's avid search for knowledge and his ability to heal and bring people back from death, respectively<sup>65</sup>.

In his dissertation, Nordberg adds an interesting new aspect to the interpretation of animal motifs, again in relation to Odin<sup>66</sup>. As a mythical version of earthly kings in their royal halls, Odin is the keeper of Valhall, »the hall of the warriors killed in battle«. To enter this divine hall, a warrior had to be chosen by Odin's Valkyries after a heroic death on the battlefield; in the *Edda* and *Poetic Edda* it is frequently described how corpses of such warriors are eaten by ravens, eagles and wolves. According to Nordberg, these animals were incarnations of Odin, who in the form of an animal is taking the ultimate sacrifice a warrior could offer him. Although Nordberg does not discuss Nydam Style and Style I ornaments, the animals depicted on brooches and bracteates may symbolize this sacrifice and the transfer of dead warriors to Valhall<sup>67</sup>.

If these interpretations are correct, the following themes may be expressed visually: 1. Odin with his helping spirits; 2. Odin's ability to transfer into and to communicate with animals and to decide over life and death; and 3. Odin's role as keeper of Valhall. In a stylized way, some similar or closely related messages now become visible when we start »reading« the Heiloo brooch. The human head with a moustache on the foot plate, like the second human head on the head plate, probably is an image of Odin, or his counterpart



**Fig. 12** A silver-gilt buckle tongue from Elsfleth (Lkr. Wesermasch/D; see also fig. 9, 4), dating to the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The niello fill of one of the eyes had been carefully removed. – (Collection and © Niedersächsisches Institut für historische Küstenforschung, Wilhelmshaven). – Scale 4:1.

Wodan: a stern-looking face with a moustache or beard and the mouth open, the curves in the lower kidney shape perhaps also symbolizing divine breath. The head on the foot plate is flanked by (stylized) birds, bending towards each other around Odin's eyes. Other pairs of birds are represented by the kidney-shaped head plate, flanking a second human head, and by the kidney-shaped terminal of the foot plate; these birds probably are ravens or eagles, which refer to Odin's familiars and Valhall. Finally, the foot plate not only shows a human face but at the same time an animal head seen from above, probably of a horse or wolf, or a combination of both. The ambiguity of the image, containing a complex »layering« of mythical stories, is a common phenomenon on Scandinavian brooches and is also to be expected on Scandinavian-style ornaments in the southern North Sea area.

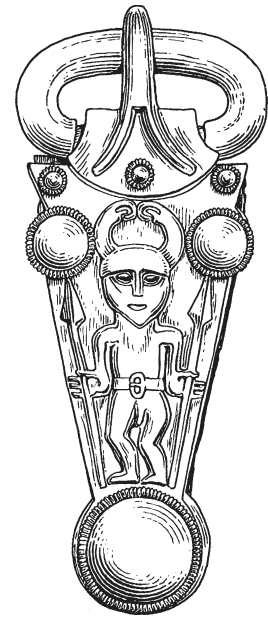
### THE EDDA OUTSIDE SCANDINAVIA?

Historians have always taken great caution in applying the mythological and heroic content of the *Edda* and *Poetic Edda* to the traditions and history of continental Europe. An increasing number of archaeological finds from the 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> century, however, shows the northern, Scandinavian focus of Germanic people in Northwestern Europe, both culturally and ideologically. Four examples of such finds are:

1. The »Jutlandic«-style brooch from an inhumation grave at Nordendorf (Lkr. Augsburg/D; first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century). On its back it bears a runic inscription: *awa (l) eubwini* and *logapore / wodan / wigiponar*<sup>68</sup>. The first part can be read as »[Gift from] Awa and Leubwini«. In the second part the name of an unknown god is followed by that of Wodan, and by a reference to Donar (»wigiponar«, meaning »holy thunder« or »fight-thunder«).



2. A silver-gilt buckle tongue from Elsfleth (Lkr. Wesermasch/D; 6<sup>th</sup> century; **fig. 12**), a landing place on a tributary of the Weser<sup>69</sup>. The mushroom-shaped part of the tongue is decorated with a bearded head in niello. The original niello fill of the right eye had been carefully removed to transform an early image of Christ into an image of Odin/Wodan, who is known to have given up one of his eyes in his enduring quest for wisdom and knowledge.
3. The famous helmet from Sutton Hoo (Suffolk/GB; mound 1, early 7<sup>th</sup> century). The garnets that decorate the left eyebrow of the face mask lack the usual backing with gold foil<sup>70</sup>. When the helmet was worn inside the royal hall, in the firelight, the person behind the face-mask would present himself as lacking one eye, and thus as an earthly representative of Odin/Wodan.
4. The gilded copper-alloy buckle from an inhumation grave at Finglesham (Kent/GB; grave 95, early 7<sup>th</sup> century; **fig. 13**)<sup>71</sup>. The buckle plate shows the image of a naked warrior with spears and a helmet with opposing bird's heads. The stamped copper-alloy foils that decorate the Sutton Hoo helmet show similar »dancing warriors«, a theme closely paralleled by scenes on Swedish helmets and some copper-alloy mounts from southern England<sup>72</sup>. If indeed dancers are depicted, the design may relate to the performance of a warrior ritual that focused on Odin/Wodan, as warrior god and protector in battle. On Swedish helmets, the theme of the dancing warrior is presented in combination with that of warriors in wolf-skins or with a wild boar on their helmets; these »wolf-warriors« and »boar-warriors« probably were part of royal elite troops, dressed as »warriors of Odin«<sup>73</sup>.



**Fig. 13** The bronze-gilt buckle from an inhumation grave at Finglesham (Kent/GB), dating to the early 7<sup>th</sup> century. The buckle plate shows a »dancing warrior«. – (After Chadwick Hawkes/Grainger 2006, fig. 2.102). – Scale 1:1.

The importance of Odin/Wodan in the southern North Sea area is further supported by the historically known genealogy of the Wuffingas, the royal family of East Anglia, who buried their members at Sutton Hoo: it includes not only Caesar but also Wodan as ancestors<sup>74</sup>. This genealogy is most probably related to an origin myth that described the divine descent of the Wuffingas, similar to the Scandinavian origin myths of other Anglo-Saxon, Scandinavian and some continental royal families<sup>75</sup>.

## WODAN IN EARLY-MEDIEVAL FRISIA

Although there is no surviving origin myth or genealogy for the royal families that ruled contemporary kingdoms in the area of early-medieval Frisia, the images on brooches and bracteates show that Odin/Wodan must have been important in these regions as well. In the same area, as in other parts of Germanic-speaking Europe, early-medieval personal names frequently relate to battle gear as a symbol of combat and bravery (sword, spear, helmet), and to mythological animals that also symbolize bravery (eagle, bear, wolf, wild boar)<sup>76</sup>. Examples of such personal names from North-Holland are the names of farmers on the island of Wieringen, as mentioned in a list of church property from the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> century: Gerhelm (Spear-helmet), Saxger (»Sword-spear«), Wibald (»Holy-brave«), Evorbald (»Wild boar-bravery«), Wulfbold (»Wolf-bravery«), Hidulf (»Battle-wolf«), Redulf (»Fame-wolf«), Aldchrauan (»Old/Honourable raven«), Revnulf (»Raven-wolf«) and Aldolf (»Noble-wolf«)<sup>77</sup>.

That the popularity of such names was linked to the belief in pre-Christian gods can be deduced from the so-called Old Saxon or Utrecht Baptismal Vow, probably written in the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. By responding to the first part of this vow, the convert would renounce his or her worship of the devil and some pagan, Germanic gods<sup>78</sup>:

1. *Do you renounce the devil?*

*(response:) I renounce the devil.*

2. *And all sacrifices to the devil?*

*(response:) And I renounce all sacrifices to the devil.*

3. *And all deeds and words of the devil?*

*(response:) And I renounce all the deeds and words of the devil, Thunear, Wōden and Saxnōt, and all those fiends that are their companions.*

The oath ends with a list of 30 pagan customs proscribed by the church, the *Indiculus superstitionum et paganiarum*. The making of prophecies by examining the faeces of birds, horses and cattle is mentioned, as well as offerings to and celebrations in honour of Wodan and Donar (called Jupiter and Mercury in the Latin text).

The intriguing fact that Germanic-speaking people during the Middle Ages retained the names of pagan gods for their days of the week, although the Catholic church would have tried to prevent this, shows how deeply rooted the belief in such deities must have been<sup>79</sup>. Apparently, Tiw/Týr (Tuesday), Wodan/Odin (Wednesday), Donar/Thor (Thursday) and Frīja/Frigg or Freya (Friday) were familiar to the Germanic people, indicating that a certain basic notion existed about their capacities and related attributes<sup>80</sup>. Although the mythological stories in the *Edda* and *Poetic Edda* were written down in Iceland in an environment dominated by Christian thoughts and beliefs, and relate to Nordic beliefs and traditions, a growing body of archaeological evidence makes clear that the southern North Sea area as well as the German-speaking parts of the continent, at least ideologically, must be seen as part of the »northern« religious world long before the Viking period.

## AN IDEOLOGICAL CLASH

During the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, when the Domburg brooch was in fashion, the coastal area of the present Netherlands was situated between two political-ideological power blocks: the Scandinavian, pagan kingdoms in the north, and the Frankish, Christian kingdom in the south. The southern North Sea area can be seen as the transitional zone between the two worlds, a zone that was gradually losing ground when missionaries followed in the footsteps of Charles Martel and Charlemagne, as conquerors of »Frisian« and »Saxon« territory from the late 7<sup>th</sup> century onwards. After the Rhine zone had functioned as a northern border of Frankish territory since the 5<sup>th</sup> century, this border following the Saxon Wars (772-804) had shifted northwards up to Danevirke in Schleswig-Holstein.

Despite the growing power of the Frankish kingdom, it is interesting to see that the North Sea elite chose not simply to imitate Frankish jewellery as their new insignia during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. Instead, cultural identity was expressed in which a mythical link with Scandinavia was visualized. An important aspect of this link was the development of a Wodan with Odinic characteristics and the incorporation of this Wodan in the royal genealogies. The cultural-ideological focus on Scandinavia, even after political bonds with the Frankish royal house were established<sup>81</sup>, can be explained by the expansionist nature of the Franks: to resist



**Fig. 14** Two disc brooches from Noord-Bakkum (prov. North-Holland/NL), dating between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century. One brooch (1) displays an enamelled cross motif; the other (2) is shaped as an equal-armed cross. – (Private collection, photos J. A. W. Nicolay). – Scale 3:2.

Frankish annexation not only political coalitions and strong military power were required, but also a non-Frankish ideology, focusing on ancestral, »northern« gods.

As a result, after the fall of the West-Roman Empire, an ideological border divided Northwestern Europe into a Frankish-Christian and a Scandinavian-pagan part for at least two centuries<sup>82</sup>. This border should not be seen as a thin line but as a wide transitional zone. This zone included Anglo-Saxon England and the Frisian-Saxon area north of the Rhine, as well as northern Gaul. Interestingly, within these transitional areas Christian and pre-Christian iconographies could be combined, both on individual objects and as combinations of objects in the same context, as in the pagan-Christian burial chamber of the »Prittlewell prince« (Essex/GB)<sup>83</sup>.

Little is known about the introduction of gods with Old Norse characteristics in the southern North Sea area. There is no evidence that indigenous Germanic gods were replaced by Scandinavian gods with similar or closely related capacities and/or attributes. More probably, new or slightly adjusted capacities and attributes were assigned to those indigenous gods that in some way were similar to the northern gods. This explains why these gods kept their Germanic names and, together with some of the »traditional« gods, like Logapōre and Saxnōt, remained part of the Germanic, or actually Germanic-Scandinavian, pantheon throughout the Migration and Merovingian periods.

At first, the Scandinavian-style gods were worshipped among members of the leading elites, as demonstrated by the visualization of Wodan and his animal companions on luxury items such as silver-gilt »Jutlandic« brooches and gold bracteates. The image of Wodan became popular among the wider rural population after the mid 6<sup>th</sup> century, as reflected by the production of hundreds of Domburg brooches in copper-alloy. The youngest ornaments with a reference to Wodan were worn during the final decades of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, including the Heiloo brooch, buried c. 675. In the following centuries, Wodan and other Germanic gods gradually lost ground in favour of the new Christian cult as brooches with a Christian cross motif demonstrate (fig. 14). The final blow to the traditional pantheon, however, came around 1000 in the form of the systematic and widespread building of churches across the Dutch-German coastal area, during an episode of so-called in-depth evangelization<sup>84</sup>.

## CONCLUSION

The discovery of a simple, copper-alloy brooch at Heiloo led to a complex, but intriguing attempt to »read« the symbolic messages hidden in its design and decoration. Inspired by the religious and mythological messages on Scandinavian-style brooches and bracteates, the manufacturers of Domburg brooches added different layers of symbolic motifs, with a central focus on Odin/Wodan and his helping spirits. The visualization of Old Norse themes was boosted by the expanding Frankish kingdom to the south. Instead of people willingly accepting Christian values, the »northern« belief system was embraced and powerfully visualized in the symbolic messages on brooches and other ornaments. That Odin/Wodan and other Germanic gods

were not entirely forgotten after the Frankish annexation, not even after in-depth evangelization, is still evident every week – especially when its Wodan's or Odin's day!

## Acknowledgements

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## Notes

- 1) Moesker/Dijkstra in prep.
- 2) Brooch: find no. 2574, find context: feature 2563 (structure 109).
- 3) Roes 1954; 1955. – Volgraff-Roes 1959.
- 4) Volgraff-Roes 1959, 81.
- 5) Werner 1955.
- 6) Schulze-Dörrlamm 1986, 619-620.
- 7) See Koch 1998, type VII.2.
- 8) Roes 1954, 69.
- 9) Werner 1955, 77; for a similar conclusion, see Koch 1998, 453-454.
- 10) Botman 1994.
- 11) Recently, on the website of »Portable Antiquities of the Netherlands« ([www.portable-antiquities.nl](http://www.portable-antiquities.nl)) a simpler division into four types (A-D) has been suggested; for a study of the symbolic language, the detailed typology is more useful.
- 12) Botman 1994, 26-32.
- 13) Nicolay in prep.
- 14) Heeren/Botman in prep.
- 15) Botman 1994, 38-40.
- 16) The metal finds from Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer will be published by Heeren/Botman in prep.
- 17) Dijkstra 2011, 355; see also Dijkstra/de Koning 2017, 65-66.
- 18) Koch 1999, nos 5. 7-8. 33. – Fiedel 2014, fig. 13d.
- 19) See Bazelmans/Dijkstra/de Koning 2004.
- 20) Tac. Germ. 34.
- 21) Dijkstra/de Koning 2017.
- 22) Nieuwhof 2016.
- 23) Dijkstra 2011, 80-83.
- 24) Dijkstra/de Koning 2017, 59.
- 25) de Koning 2012.
- 26) Dijkstra/de Koning 2017, 62-64.
- 27) Ibidem 67.
- 28) Nicolay 2014, 234-244.
- 29) de Koning 2012; 2018.
- 30) Katwijk: Dijkstra/de Koning 2017, 62-64; Wieringen: unpublished metal-detector find.
- 31) E.g. Hedeager 2011. An exception, of course, is the work by Hauck, which is problematic because of the way historical and iconographic sources from different periods and cultural backgrounds have been combined (e.g. Hauck 1992).
- 32) E.g. Wood 2018, with a focus on Wodan.
- 33) Haseloff 1981, 8-17.
- 34) Rau 2010, 297-301.
- 35) Haseloff 1973; 1981, 84-85.
- 36) Haseloff 1981, 21 ff.
- 37) Nielsen 2009 (type Tournai). – Nicolay 2014, 244-250 (regional types).
- 38) Chadwick Hawkes 1981.
- 39) Nicolay 2017.
- 40) Nicolay 2014, 87-88 fig. 4.30-31.
- 41) Heeren/van der Feijst 2017, pl. 77.
- 42) Haseloff 1981, 50.
- 43) Werner 1955, 77.
- 44) See Koch 1998, Typentafel 4.
- 45) Schulze-Dörrlamm 1986, 619-620 tab. 1: no. 7.
- 46) Schulze 1977. – Heeren/van der Feijst 2017, 189-191.
- 47) See the contributions in Fabech/Näsman 2017.
- 48) de Leeuw 2002.
- 49) Böhme 1986, 554-557.
- 50) de Leeuw 2002, 27-65. 125-140.
- 51) See Reichstein 1975.
- 52) See Koch 1998.
- 53) Böhner 1959.
- 54) Knol et al. 1995/1996, 399-401.
- 55) Heeren/van der Feijst 2017, 338-339.

- 56) For a similar set of images on gold bracteates, see Nicolay 2017, 506-507.
- 57) E. g. Dickinson 2005.
- 58) Botman 1994, 48.
- 59) For some valuable exceptions, see recently Pesch 2017a; 2017b; Kristoffersen 2017.
- 60) Pesch 2017a, 486-488.
- 61) Olsen 2001; 2005/2006.
- 62) Hedeager 1999; 2005; 2011.
- 63) Hedeager 2011, 95-98.
- 64) These are the bracteates with male heads; Seebold 1992; 1994.
- 65) Pesch 2017a; 2017b.
- 66) Nordberg 2004.
- 67) Cf. Dobat 2006.
- 68) Düwel 1982.
- 69) Mückenberger 2013.
- 70) Price/Mortimer 2014.
- 71) Chadwick Hawkes/Grainger 2006, 80.
- 72) E. g. Bruce-Mitford 1978, 186-189.
- 73) Nielsen 2001; 2007, 163-164.
- 74) Bruce-Mitford 1975, 693 tab. 38.
- 75) E. g. Yorke 2005, 15-16; Hedeager 2011, 44.
- 76) Hedeager 2011, 80-81.
- 77) See [www.taaldacht.nl/germaanse-namen](http://www.taaldacht.nl/germaanse-namen) (10.2.2021).
- 78) Mostert 2009, 128-129; translation by the authors.
- 79) E. g. Janson 2013, 145-150.
- 80) See Simek 1993.
- 81) See Wood 1992.
- 82) See also Hedeager 1992.
- 83) See Wamers 2009; Kars 2018 (mixed iconographies); Blackmore et al. 2019 (Prittlewell).
- 84) See Milis 2005. – de Langen/Mol 2017.

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## Zusammenfassung / Summary / Résumé

### Die mythischen Vögel des Wodan. Symbolische Sprache auf einer Bügelfibel des Domburg-Typs aus Heiloo (prov. North-Holland/NL)

Die detaillierte Untersuchung einer Bügelfibel des Domburg-Typs, die 2012 in einer merowingerzeitlichen ländlichen Siedlung bei Heiloo gefunden wurde, legt dar, wie Form und Dekoration eines einfachen Frauen-Schmuckstücks im 6. und 7. Jahrhundert eine ganz bestimmte Symbolsprache zum Ausdruck brachten. Wenn man die Ikonografie der Fibel mit der anderer Fibeln im südlichen Nordseeraum und in Skandinavien vergleicht und ihre Botschaft mithilfe der altnordischen Literatur rekonstruiert, wird deutlich, dass die Symbolik des »Mannes zwischen Tieren« auf einen germanischen Gott mit ähnlichen Eigenschaften und Merkmalen wie den skandinavischen Odin verweist. Die Fibel zeigt wahrscheinlich Wodan, flankiert von seinen mythischen Vögeln.

### **Wodan's Mythical Birds. Symbolic Language on a Small-long Brooch of the Domburg Type from Heiloo (prov. North-Holland/NL)**

This detailed study of a small-long brooch of the Domburg type, found in 2012 in a Merovingian-period rural settlement at Heiloo, explains how the shape and decoration of a simple female ornament in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries expressed a very specific symbolic language. When the brooch's iconography is compared with that of other brooches in the southern North Sea area and Scandinavia, and its message is reconstructed with the help of the Old Norse literature, it becomes clear that the symbolism of »a man between animals« refers to a Germanic god with similar qualities and characteristics as the Scandinavian Odin. The brooch probably is showing Wodan, both flanked by his mythical birds.

### **Les oiseaux mythiques de Wotan. Langage symbolique sur une fibule svelte de type Domburg provenant de Heiloo (prov. North-Holland/NL)**

L'étude détaillée d'une fibule svelte de type Domburg, trouvée en 2012 dans un habitat rural mérovingien à Heiloo, explique comment la forme et le décor d'un simple bijou féminin exprimaient un langage symbolique très spécifique aux 6<sup>e</sup> et 7<sup>e</sup> siècles ap. J.-C. Si l'on compare cette iconographie à celles d'autres fibules de la mer du Nord et de la Scandinavie et que l'on reconstruit son message à l'aide de la littérature en vieux norois, il devient clair que le symbole constitué par »un homme entre deux animaux« renvoie à une divinité présentant des qualités et des caractéristiques similaires à celles de l'Odin scandinave. La fibule représente fort probablement Wotan flanqué de ses oiseaux mythiques.

Traduction: Y. Gautier

#### *Schlüsselwörter / Keywords / Mots clés*

Bügel fibel / Domburg-Typ / symbolische Sprache / Odin-Wodan / altnordische Literatur

Small-long brooch / type Domburg / symbolic language / Odin-Wodan / Old Norse literature

Fibule svelte / type Domburg / langage symbolique / Odin-Wodan / littérature en vieux norois

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