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AN INSCRIBED ANGLO-SAXON LID FROM LUND
(Pl. XIII, B)

The carved wooden lid illustrated in Pl. XIII, B was found in 1961 in Lund during the excavation of kv Fargaren 22, the so-called Thule excavation. The lid was found in square O 36, near the well, in a position suggesting that it was deposited on the slope leading to the well while this was still open. The lid is preserved in the Kulturen, Lund, Sweden, no. KM 53436.1

The lid measures c. 340 mm in length and is made of sycamore wood.2 The top is rounded and the underneath flat, with one end wider than the other. The top of the wider end is carved with an animal mask, possibly that of a lion; no doubt this end formed the grip for opening and closing the lid. The rest of the top is carved with acanthus foliage in shallow relief. The underneath of the wider end, that is, beneath the animal mask, has an incised text. The underneath of the rest contains a shallow depression incised with diagonal lines to form a pattern of diamond shapes.

The text is inscribed in two lines with the letters incised and then blackened. The first four letters are formed by single incisions but most of the remaining letters are formed by double incisions. The letters are in a capital script and are rather deteriorated. The text reads:

LEO[F]PIN[\ldots]
[\ldots][\ldots]

From the remaining traces the text can probably be reconstructed as, LEO[F]PIN[E ME F]-, although the F of LEO[F]PIN[E] and the E of [ME] are rather unusual in form. The text may originally have read, LEO[F]PIN[E ME FECIT], ‘Leo(f)win(e) (made me)’.

Several Anglo-Saxon inscriptions employ a similar formula, for example, 163 Dublin II, a leather scabbard with the text, +EDRIC ME FE[C][\ldots], and 19 Canterbury I, the Canterbury coin-brooch, one of whose texts reads, +PVDEMAN FECID.6 The Lund text thus fits into the context of Anglo-Saxon inscriptions, the script is perfectly consistent with Anglo-Saxon capitals, and Leofwine is a common Anglo-Saxon name. Some of the 11th-century coins struck in Lund contain the name of a moneyer Leofwine.7 It is unlikely that this is more than coincidence since it is generally accepted, on the basis of the carving, that the lid is Anglo-Saxon work imported into Scandinavia.8

Roesdahl et al. describe it as ‘a beautiful example of the English Winchester style’.9 Eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon work provides other examples of an animal mask with foliage.10 One such is the early 11th-century ivory tau-cross from Alcester, Warwickshire, now in the British Museum, no. 1903, 3–23.11 Others occur in illuminated initials in manuscripts, especially in the B of Beatus (Psalm 1) in, for example, MS. London, BL Arundel 455 fol. 12 and MS. London, BL Stowe 2 fol. 1.12 There are only two comparable objects known to me. One is the mid 11th-century ivory pencease with sliding lid found in the City of London and now in the British Museum, no. 1870, 8–11, 1.13 It is c. 235 mm in length, slightly smaller than the Lund lid. The ivory lid is also wider at one end with an animal mask at the wider end; in addition there is another animal head on the narrower end of the case itself. It too is decorated with foliage, but not acanthus. The other is the wooden box with sliding lid found in the Christ Church Place excavation, Dublin, in a mid 10th-century context.14 It is considerably smaller than the Lund lid, some 155 mm in length, and contains no animal mask or acanthus foliage. Instead it is covered on all sides, including the base, with incised ornament.
Blomqvist and Mårtensson think that the Lund lid was from a pencase, arguing that the diamond pattern was incised to enable a layer of wax to adhere to the wood so that the underneath could be used as a wax writing tablet. There is some documentary evidence suggesting that wax writing tablets were known in Anglo-Saxon England and one possible example has been found, the bone tablet from Blythburgh, Suffolk, now in the British Museum, no. 1902, 3–15. Styli and wax tablets are to be seen in some manuscript illustrations, for example in the Trier Registrum Gregorii. The PK Bank excavation in Lund brought to light an iron object, possibly a stylus, from an 11th-century context and two wooden wax tablets, one dating from the first half of the 12th century and one from the 13th century. Mårtensson describes the earlier of these as having incisions similar to those on the Lund lid under discussion.

There is, therefore, some evidence for the existence of wax tablets in Anglo-Saxon England and indeed in Lund. There is one possible wax tablet from Anglo-Saxon England (from Blythburgh), and one ivory pencase and lid (from the City of London) which does not incorporate a wax tablet. In the light of this, it seems to me possible that the Lund lid came from a pencase and possible that it incorporated a wax tablet; it does not seem to me that we can be certain on either point. The lid may have come from a box with some other function, perhaps comparable to the Dublin example.

The Lund lid was found in an archaeological context which suggests a date of c. 1025–50. The carving on the lid supports a date in the first half of the 11th century. There is no linguistic evidence for dating the text and only slight epigraphic evidence, but what there is also supports this dating.

There seems little doubt that the Lund lid is an Anglo-Saxon object of the early to mid-11th century. Evidencing a high degree of workmanship and containing an inscription, it is of considerable interest in itself. It also provides a small piece of information to add to the growing and complex picture of the relationship between England and Scandinavia in the 11th century.

Acknowledgements

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ELISABETH OKASHA

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF WORKS MENTIONING THE LUND LID

(These are cited in abbreviated form in the Notes)

A. Andrén, 'Biskopen som försvann... eller att tolka lyud', Medeltidsarkeologisk tidsskrift, 1 (1980), 16–17 and fig.

NOTES

1 Blomqvist and Mårtensson (1963), esp. 213–16.
2 Presumably the wood is sycamore, not maple: 'skuren i lönnträ', Blomqvist and Mårtensson (1963), 213.
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3 There are some inconsistencies: the N, for example, is composed of two double incisions and one single incision.

4 The term 'rather deteriorated' and the system of transliteration used are fully explained in, E. Okasha, Hand-list of Anglo-Saxon Non-runic Inscriptions (Cambridge, 1971), 44–45. Briefly: A indicates a legible letter; $A$ indicates a letter damaged but legible; [A] indicates a damaged letter where the restoration is fairly certain; [:] indicates one lost letter; [;:] indicates around two or three lost letters; | indicates the end of a line of text.


6 Okasha, op. cit. in note 4, 58–59 and fig.; see also p. 8.


8 Blomqvist and Martensson (1963), 214–16. See also the other works listed in the Bibliography above.

9 Roedahl et al. (1981), 180.

10 I am most grateful to Dr Jennifer O'Reilly, University College, Cork, for bringing these examples to my attention.


13 Beckwith, op. cit. in note 11, no. 46, p. 128 and figs.

14 Graham-Campbell (1980), no. 34, p. 15 and figs.

15 Blomqvist and Martensson (1963), 213.


17 Trier, Stadtbibliothek MS 1711, c. 983–96, illustrated in M. Backes and R. Dölling, Art of the Dark Ages (Baden Baden, 1969), 160 and fig.

18 Martensson (1976), 357–58.


20 Blomqvist and Martensson (1963), 216.

21 Roedahl et al. (1981), 180.

A RUNESTONE FROM SKARA BRAE, ORKNEY (Fig. 5)

In 1963 an Ancient Monuments works squad was rebuilding the sea wall at Skara Brae (Long. 3° 31' W, Lat. 59° 3' N, HY 232 187) on Orkney. Cartloads of slabs were brought from quarries below high water mark W. and NW. of the settlement. They were supplemented by slabs which had weathered out of the sands around and covering Skara Brae. A member of the work squad noticed that a slab had markings on one face; but the slab was split and both halves were inadvertently used face down as paving on the path which runs by the sea wall.

In 1982 Mr J. Drever of the Ancient Monuments Division sought and refound it. Realizing that the marks were runes he had the slab transported for safe keeping to the new Ancient Monuments Depot at Hatston, Kirkwall. Its final disposition has not yet been decided.

The original finder, M. S. Firth, died before details of the stone's discovery could be recorded; although no-one now survives of those working on the sea wall in 1963 another member of the work squad, Mr E. Harrald, has provided information about the origins of the slabs used. The rune-stone is unlikely to have come from below high water mark: it is little weathered. It may have come from a Viking site in the upper levels of the sand cliff some 200 m W. of Skara Brae and close to where a Viking cist was discovered in 1888.1 But it seems most likely to have been one of those which eroded out of the sands around Skara Brae during the storm which necessitated rebuilding of the sea wall. That is the opinion of Mr Harrald, who thinks it improbable that the squad would have sought slabs along the base of the sand cliff.

The slab measures 1.4 by 0.85 m. It is of Orkney flagstone and is half of an originally thicker slab. The other half was also used as a paving stone at Skara Brae; it has been checked and bears no carvings. The inscription is fairly fresh and can easily be distinguished from natural cracks, flake edges and abrasions. It is composed of ill-formed straggling single strokes varying in thickness from 0.8 to 0.5 mm. The vertical strokes have either a symmetrical blunt V-shaped cross-section or have the steeper side to the right. They are nearly as deep