

The Gold Bracteates from the Migration Period as seen from a Freemason's perspective

Arvid Ystad, Freemason, Author, Mechanical engineer NTNU, MBA INSEAD.

Oslo, 6. July 2026

This article examines the possible significance of the gold bracteates and medallions from the Migration Period in Scandinavia, 370 – 550 CE, and explores their importance in the religious rituals and beliefs.

Most gold bracteates appear to have served as visible markers indicating that their wearers were accepted by the gods through initiation rites. The bracteates were worn on a band or cord around the neck. Individuals who were initiated to a god were guaranteed to join that god after death. Gold medallions depicting Roman emperors appear to have been worn by the officiants of the rituals. These roles were typically assumed by kings, chieftains, or other elite figures who presided over ritual assemblies.

If I am correct in my assumptions and interpretations of the motifs on the bracteates, the Masonic symbolism of "The winding Stairs" in King Solomon's Temple, among other things, is a direct continuation of the symbolism of the old Scandinavian religion with initiation rites to the gods Odin and Thor, which Vikings and settlers brought with them to the British Isles in the Viking Age. This adaptation probably occurred under King Athelstone in England in the 920s, as three medieval writings tell of.

I conclude that the symbolism appearing on many of the gold medallions of the A types and most of the gold bracteates of the C and D types, are probably the same as, or similar to, the symbolism found in the first three degrees of Freemasonry today.

The interpretations in this article draw on my book *The Freemasons in the Viking Age* (2023), which, based on initiation practices in Freemasonry, proposes a reconstruction of the ancient initiation rites that took place during the Viking Age and earlier.

Further interpretations are based on my work *Med hester til himmelen – Osebergskipet og den norrøne religionen* (*With Horses to Heaven: The Oseberg Ship and the Norse Religion*), Oslo, 2025. This book discusses the Indo-European Divine Twins, whom scholars have long suggested were central to religious belief in Scandinavia during the Bronze Age. The book argues that the Divine Twins continued to play a significant role during the Iron Age until the introduction of Christianity. It concludes that the Divine Twins—identified as Odin and Thor in the Viking Age—were believed to transport the dead to the heavens (Odin)

and later return them to earth for rebirth (Thor). References are made to these books for the statements and hypotheses presented in this article.

The Golden Bracteates

The gold bracteates (from Latin *bractea*, a thin piece of metal) have been a riddle for scholars for several centuries. The bracteates are round gold medals with loops, to attach to a band or string around the neck. They are marked with a piston and often have a diameter of 20 – 40 mm, up to 120 mm. Though the motif in the middle is usually small, the surrounding border makes the bracteate large. The bracteates are distinguished by a great wealth of detail and a great variety in the motifs. The bracteates were produced in the latter part of the migration period, 450 – 550 CE.

Approximately 1170 bracteates from 725 different dies have been identified, primarily from southern Scandinavia. Nearly half originate from Denmark, around 230 from Sweden, and approximately 200 from Norway. Additional finds have been recorded in Germany, England, and Eastern Europe.

Bracteates are often recovered as hoards together with other objects, frequently in proximity to supra-regional political and religious central places, such as Gudme in Denmark or Uppåkra in Sweden. These locations are also likely to have been centers of design and production. It is rare to find bracteates in graves, but when they are, they are usually found in women's graves. The Migration Period in Scandinavia is often referred to as the "Golden Age," reflecting the large influx of Roman gold into the region. This flow of gold appears to have come to an end in the 500's.¹

Scholars often divide the bracteates into groups or types according to the motifs:

A type - a large head in profile (92 found).

B type - one or at most three human-like figures (91 found).

C type - a four-legged animal with a man's head above (426 found).

D type - a central figure consisting of a stylized animal (359 found).²

Pictures, texts and places of discovery in this article, are taken from *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit* of Karl Hauck, Morten Axboe, Karl Düvel and more, 7 volumes,

¹ <https://www.uis.no/nb/arkeologisk-museum/arkeologi/rennesoy-skatten-og-tolkningen-av-folkevandringstidens-gullbrakteater>

² Information on numbers and places of discovery as well as age, is taken from English, Danish and Norwegian Nynorsk Wikipedia, as per 2. January 2016. There are also bracteates classified as E-type (280 found), F- and M-types.

München 1985-89, unless otherwise stated. The Bracteates are registered with IK and a number.

I emphasize that the A, C and D types probably can be linked to the candidates' initiations to the Scandinavian gods, similar to the rites that I have found in the rituals of Freemasonry. I therefore choose to call all bracteates and medals “jewels”, as they are called in Freemasonry. The Freemasons wear their jewels in bands around their necks.

According to the German historian and medievalist Karl Hauck, and the two Danish archaeologist Morten Axboe and Lotte Hedeager, it is the god Odin who is depicted on the A, B and C type of gold bracteates.³

Karl Hauck proposed that the images on the small bracteates represent Norse myths in an extremely condensed form, functioning as a kind of coded system. In some cases, this interpretation appears relatively clear, despite the more than 500-year gap between the bracteates and the written sources for the myths. For example, a B-type bracteate from Trollhättan in Sweden depicts the god Týr placing his hand in the jaws of the wolf Fenrir. An A-type bracteate from Lyngby in Denmark shows the Midgard Serpent biting its own tail. In addition, some runic inscriptions on bracteates are thought to refer to the god Odin/Wodan. These inscriptions mention a number of poetic names that recall Odin’s epithets in skaldic poetry, such as *Glāugir*, “Shining Eye” and *FakaR*, “Horse”.⁴

Scholars of runic writing have recently (2023) identified the name of Odin on one of the gold bracteates from the Vindelev find near Jelling in southern Jutland, where the inscription reads “He is Odin’s man.” It shows that the god was known as early as the beginning of the 400s.⁵ This bracteate probably belonged to a warrior initiated to Odin.

I will now show what I, as a Freemason for over 40 years and an independent researcher of Freemasonry, believe may have been the symbolism of the jewels.

Jewels of the A Type and more

We will now look at jewels of the A type which the kings probably wore around their necks when they performed the Rite of Odin and some also the Rite of Thor. We will later look at

³ Morten Axboe, *Brakteatstudier - Studies in gold Bracteates*, 2007, Series: Nordiske Fortidsminder, Ser. B, Vol. 25, p 141-200, p 154

⁴ <https://www.uis.no/nb/arkeologisk-museum/arkeologi/rennesoy-skatten-og-tolkningen-av-folkevandringstidens-gullbrakteater>

⁵ <https://natmus.dk/nyhed/verdens-aeldste-indskrift-med-odin-fundet-paa-vindelevguld/>

the C type, which can be linked to the jewels that the candidate received during his initiations to Odin and to Thor.

The A type are usually medallions, which are gold plates that have been decorated on both sides with different motifs. True bracteates, on the other hand, are decorated only on one side and have thinner gold-plates, although I call both jewels. The A type are often copies of Roman medallions or gold coins with imperial heads in profile. The medallions which are best copied, also have Roman characters.

A large gold medallion has been found in Transylvania with images of Emperor Constantine the Great (who died 337 CE) on one side and with the Sun God on the other.⁶ Constantine worshiped the Sun God, Sol Invictus, but converted to Christianity on his deathbed, according to Christian tradition. A medallion, IK 282, found on the farm Hóv in the Fosnes municipality in Namdalen in Trøndelag (north of Trondheim) for instance, has the following text: D(ominus) N(oster) CONS(TA)N(S).

We are now going to study some gold medallions probably depicting the Divine Twins. Below we see **IK 47,2** from **Broholm/Oure/Near Gudme/Svendborg on Funen** (classed as A type) with two similar emperor heads. The motif on these shows the Divine Twins, says Karl Hauck.

The text is an imitation on an emperor's text reconstructed as “(Cons)tans P(ius) F(elix) Aug(ustus)”. Karl Hauck continues: “The left bust has hatched hairstyles and a diadem whose round forehead jewel is twisted in front. A beaded band is visible above the temple. The right bust has hatched hairstyles, and the forehead jewel of its diadem is also visible in front, as is the band above the temple”.

Between the heads is a triskelion, an ancient, probably religious symbol, also found in Nordic rock carvings.

⁶ Mogens B. Mackeprang, *De Nordiske Gullbrakteater*, Aarhus, 1952, p 29



I see the motifs on the jewel from a different angle: The two busts look quite similar, but the diadems are somewhat different. From the diadem jewels in front of the foreheads there are two oblique lines that form a kind of "corridor" down to the neck of the busts. The one to the left ends in two bullets. The "corridor" on the bust on the right passes through two bullets, then a bend and then four bullets. Could there be a symbolism related to the twin gods here, to Odin in the east and to Thor in the west?

In my book "Med hester til himmelen", I show that archaeologists have found clear traces of two and four (sometimes two and three) pillars or posts in mortuary halls, mighty tombs and cult halls throughout Scandinavia. These posthole traces in the ground are evident from the end of the Stone Age and up to the Viking Age. The pillars in the halls were probably intended as the earthly symbols of the doors of the twin gods in heaven: Odin's four pillars in the east as the constellation the Serpent Bearer and Thor's two pillars in the west symbolizing the constellation of Gemini. The arrangement and placement of these pillars strongly resemble the five (or sometimes six) pillars in the halls of Freemasonry today.

Back to the gold medallion. Did the "corridors" symbolize the dead warrior's journey or the candidate's journey to the god's gates during their initiations? Could the bullets symbolize the pillars of the gods that the candidates pass or reach? If so, could the journey to Odin in the east, start in the circle "diadem" and pass through two pillars, then make a bend

before it ends at the four pillars? And could the journey to the god Thor in the west end in the two pillars?

We shall see more about this symbolism later.

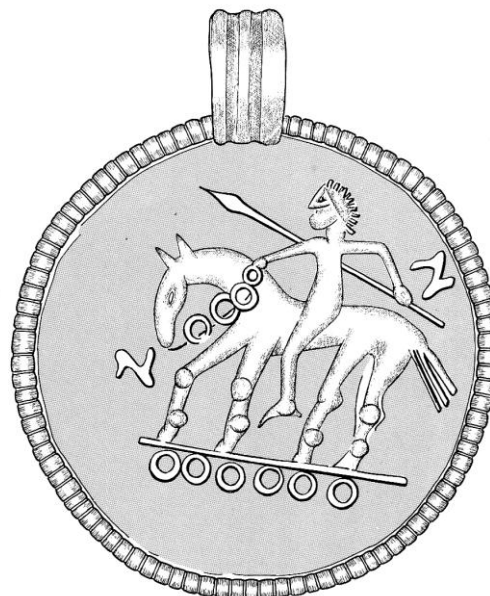
The **medallion IK 351** depicted below, was found near Sundsvall in north Sweden. We see the imitation of the emperor's head on the front side with a mysterious “script” around it. Could the possible pearl headband have a symbolic meaning? We see the pearl ribbon through the hair that ends in two bullets behind the neck. If this head is depicting a god, this is probably the god in the west which is Thor. The two bullets at the end of the strings may refer to the two pillars of Thor. And that the candidate’s journey, on the pearl headband, start at the front of the head, passes through the hair splendor, and ends by the pillars?

The back side, however, shows a warrior on horseback with a spear, we see that they hover in the air, signs of a spiritual journey. I assume this is Odin, since a spear and a horse were his characteristics. Could the rings on the horse's reins and under the horse refer to rattles, such as the many hundreds of rattles found in graves from the Late Iron Age in Norway and to the rope rattles found in the Oseberg ship?

I believe that most likely this type of medallion may have been used by kings and chieftains when initiating candidates to the Odin’s rite and to Thor’s rite.



351 Av b



351 Rv b

The **medallion IK 262 from Gundsømagle on Zealand** near Copenhagen (below) shows an imitation of a Roman emperor portrait on the front.

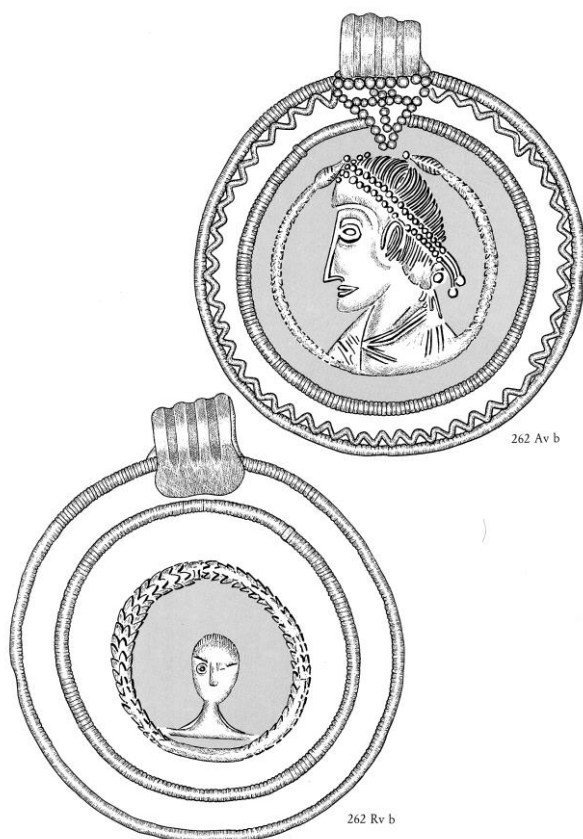
However, on the back side there is a much smaller head without hair or beard. This is strange since the hair on the head on the bracteates generally has a large hair splendor. The candidates in the rites probably had their hair cut.

The smaller head also has one marked eye with a pupil, two eyebrows, and a distinct nose. One eye and the mouth are missing on this face. The missing eye points in the direction that this too is connected to Odin, who was one-eyed. I am guessing that the missing mouth indicate that this is *the silent candidate*. An officer answers for the candidate in Freemasonry today, who himself remains silent. The inner ring around this smaller head seems to have a somewhat shell-like surface. Is this supposed to be snakes or serpents so that the candidate is with the Serpent Bearer, Odins constellation in heaven?

Could the head be the candidate in the Odin's rite?

Back to the front portrait. Here are also three rings run around the portrait; the outer ring has a zig-zag motive, that might point to snake symbolism. The inner ring seems to end in two slender heads just above the emperor's head. Could this be two snake-heads? If so, this is probably Odin's door to heaven, the constellation the Serpent Bearer. In the Viking age, Odin's door was called *Valgrindi*, "the slain warrior's door", according to *Grimnesmål*.

Note the pearl band in the hair that forms a sort of "corridor". Does this end in three or four bullets? This jewel must have belonged to an officiant in Odin's rite, probably the king.



IK 286,1 from Kälder on Gotland is also a medallion imitation, classified by archaeologists as an M-type (below). The obverse features a copy of a Roman emperor's head, with a distinct head band with two large bullets behind the head. As above, I see the candidate's journey on the head band, from the front to the back of the head where it ends with the two large bullets. If so, this head might be the god Thor.

The reverse shows a warrior wearing a battle helmet and belt, straddling two serpents. His entire posture appears firm and resolute. For Freemasons it might be interested to notice his oversized right arm at a right angle. Arms and elbows at right angles are found on several gold bracteates. These are also important Masonic symbols.

In his left hand the figure holds a spear, with the point directed downward. The serpents form a kind of gate or doorway and the figure above is also forming a door with his legs and body. Above them stands, most likely, Odin, watching over the gate. Note how both serpents form one and a half turns of a circle. This might be the same symbolism as the prow of the Oseberg ship. In my interpretation, the ship is heading toward the constellation the Serpent Bearer, Ophiuchus, which was Odin's doorway to the heavens. In the Norse poem *Grimnesmál* and in Freemasonry's first and second degree you will find the same symbolism.



286,1 Av b



286,1 Rv b

This gold jewel may have been used for initiations to Odin and to Thor during the Migration Period, probably worn in a band around the king's neck.

A unique gold medallion imitation was found in a stone cist with cremated human bones together with other grave goods from a fire pit, inside a large burial mound in **Godøy**, in the **municipality of Giske on the Sunnmøre coast**. The M type medallion, catalogued as **IK 256**, is decorated on both sides.

On the front side of the medallion, the emperor's head stands on "double horses," positioned with their heads turned outward in opposite directions, most likely facing east and west. Karl Hauck describes this motif as "He and the horse-shaped Dioscuri," the Divine Twins. But who is "he" in this context? Is it the king performing the rite, one of the twin gods themselves, or perhaps the candidate about to be accepted and initiated into the cult of the god?

The reverse side of the medallion imitation is equally intriguing. Here we see the head and torso of what may be a god or a king, "in a wagon or throne-chariot," drawn by two horses. This "high lord" raises both hands with elbows at right angles, while the horses turn their heads back to look at their master.

So, who might these figures be?



256 Av b



256 Rv b

256 Av b und Rv b Godøy-M

Could the medallion depict both the twin gods, The Divine Twins, as Karl Hauck says?

Let's have a closer look at the symbolism in the hair. The emperor's head has a double pearl band similar to what we have seen above, ending behind the head in two "pillars" with bullets on top. This is probably the symbols of the thunder god, Thor, who brings the dead warrior back to earth for rebirth near his two pillars.

And could the image on the reverse also represent the thunder god?

Similar motifs representing the god of thunder appear on the Jamtli tapestry from Östersund in Sweden, dating to the Viking Age. The motifs also appear in Freemasonry, as we soon shall see.

On the tapestry from Jamtli in Östersund, the god Thor holds up the vault of heaven with both hands and two horses follow him (below). Below to the right, we see The Worshipful Master in Freemasonry holding his two hands in the same position, invoking the god as the candidate lies down, “dead”. He is shouting “Oh My God” three times.⁷ This Grand Hailing Sign is appearing in the York Rite Master degree or third degree which used to be the rite to Thor, the god of thunder.⁸ (The Grand Hailing Sign, hail as in hail storms).⁹

I conclude that both sides of the jewel probably show the god of thunder, perhaps called Tor, meaning Gate or Door, also in the Migration Period.



Could this gold medallion belong to the king of Sunnmøre and used for initiations to the god of thunder, Thor? We shall come back to this rite of resurrection later.

The C type Jewels of the initiated in Odin's rite

The gold medallions and bracteates we have looked at so far have been jewels of dignity and position with motifs of the twin gods, Odin and/or Thor. We now shift our attention to the largest group of the gold bracteates. The archaeologists classify these as the C type. There we see illustrations of events that the candidates in the rites went through when they were initiated to the gods Odin and Thor. This group is strongly characterized by the animal

⁷ Duncan's *Ritual of Freemasonry*, New York, 1866

⁸ Arvid Ystad, *The Freemasons in the Viking Age*, Amazon, 2023, p 307

⁹ Arvid Ystad, *The Freemasons in the Viking Age*, Oslo, Amazon, 2023, p 330

ornamentation that became common in the Migration Period. A completely new symbolic language emerged at that time, and fantasy creatures played a big role.

At the end of the 1800s, several scholars claimed that the motifs on some of the C type, among other things, pointed to Odin (a bird). The Swedish archaeologist Sune Lindqvist confirmed this in 1940.¹⁰ Several Danish archaeologists, including Lotte Hedeager, also thought it is Odin depicted on these jewels.¹¹

In the Bronze Age, the Divine Twins transformed themselves to horses or horse like animals. They lifted the dead to heaven, according to scholars. This was also the case in the Viking Age, according to my interpretations.¹² Odin transformed himself into a bird or four-legged animal, fish or a snake, according to Snorri Sturlusson. The body lay as if asleep or dead, while he traveled far away for himself or for others.

Probably the C type jewels contain the initiation symbolisms to the Divine Twins which used to be both Odin and Thor. Both these gods travelled through the air on a horse or horse like animal and brought the souls of the dead to heaven and back from heaven to earth. They imagined that the souls were contained in the head, that is why we see a head on top of the animal (the god). The person who was to be initiated to a god would be shown the world he would go to after his death.

I divide the C type jewels into two subgroups, one for initiations to Odin and the other for initiations to Thor. *The Thor subgroup* shows a human head with a swastika in front of the forehead and the back of the hair differs significantly from the hair of the Odin's subgroup. This type of jewels, have probably belonged to those initiated into Thor's rite. More about this subgroup later.

The Bronze Age royal tomb in Kivik

To study the long lines of the religion, let us go back about a thousand years from the Migration Age, to the royal tomb in Kivik in Scania in Sweden.

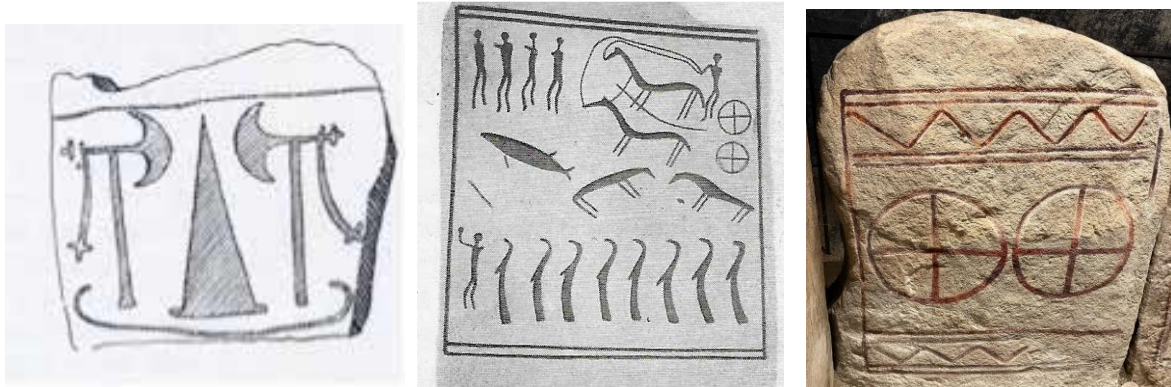
When using this magnificent tomb for a burial or for an initiation in the Bronze Age, the ceremony probably started at the entrance in the southwest where there is an even older grave, "Prinsgraven", with the remains of a cremated human, an axe and a flint, as well as

¹⁰ Mogens B. Mackeprang, *De Nordiske Gullbrakteater*, Aarhus, 1952, p 89-92, and Morten Axboe, *Brakteatstudier- Studies in gold Bracteates*, 2007, Series: Nordiske Fortidsminder, Ser. B, Vol. 25, p 141-200

¹¹ Morten Axboe, *Brakteatstudier- Studies in gold Bracteates*, 2007, Series: Nordiske Fortidsminder, Ser. B, Vol. 25, p 141-200 and Poul Kjærsum, Rikke Agnete Olsen; *Oldtidens Ansigt*; Faces of the Past, 1990, and from Wikipedia/Bracteate/English

¹² Arvid Ystad, *Med hester til himmelen*, Oslo, 2025, p 175 and according to *Grimnesmål*.

burnt human bones all around. They passed to the south-east where “slab number one” (picture below to the left) with two pillars with axes on top, was found. “The large pillar” in centre is probably not a pillar, but is symbolizing the dead warrior’s or the candidate’s upcoming journey, that ends in the horizon. At the bottom of the drawing, (and on the next slab to the north) we see the hint of a boat, a confirmation that the ascension often symbolically took place on boats. This was the belief as late as in the Viking Age, as we see with the Oseberg and Gokstad ships.



Could the candidate or the funeral procession with the bones of the deceased have wandered around inside the coffin, “up to” the door of heaven?

We probably see the ascension on another slab from Kivik (above in the middle). We see a twin god, the *luminous one*, up to the northeast. He is lifting the dead warrior up to the door of heaven. Behind the horses, we can see two circles with centre crosses, that looks like the wheels on a chariot. They can also be seen as the two pillars; other pillars are drawn in about the same way in the tomb. Between the two pillars the luminus god lifts the dead up to his four ancestors waiting for him on the Milky Way. But here is probably another double meaning: Could the four ancestors perhaps also signify the four pillars in heaven’s door? In the southwest on this slab, we can see the other twin god, the god of thunder, lifting his right arm in front of some cloaked beings, perhaps the forefathers. However the god has no hammer and is not threatening.

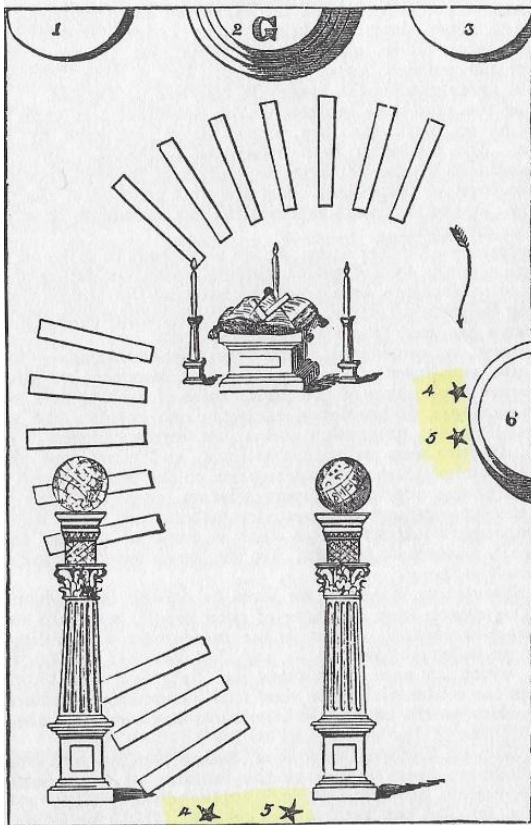
Slab “number four” in the royal tomb in Kivik (photo above to the right), which stands in the far northeast, probably shows the door to heaven. The pillars are drawn with double lines, which probably indicates four pillars. Here, two snakes hang in front of the two front pillars, which can also be shown with the two circles with centre crosses. This is probably a depiction of the constellation the Serpent Bearer, Ophiuchus, in the old religion. We shall see more about this door later.

Comparable depictions of the twin gods are also found on vases from ancient Greece, where, according to a late tradition, the twin gods were Apollo and Heracles.

Freemasonry's second degree

I have been a Freemason for many years. The rites and symbols we use in Freemasonry help me to see things that it is difficult for others to see. To better explain and interpret the motifs that lie within the large group of C type bracteates, I will show glimpses of what happens in the second and third degrees of Freemasonry.

Below is a picture of the lodge room in the second degree in Freemasonry, taken from *Duncan's Ritual of Freemasonry*, where the candidate and his conductor are shown as stars (with the numbers 5 and 4); first between the two pillars in the front and then again to the right, in front of the arrow.



Could the motifs from the second degree of Freemasonry symbolize the same journey through the pillars and up to heaven's door, as we see in the Bronze Age tomb from Kivik?

The candidate in Freemasonry enters in the west, passes the pillars, and makes a 1 ½ turn of the circle around the room. His journey ends in the east, under the letter “G” meaning “God”, at the altar with the three pillars (originally probably four pillars). Can these three or four pillars around the altar in the east symbolize the door to heaven? Could these, probably

very old steps on the Freemason's journey, be expressed on the even older hair splendor of the heads on the king's medallions as we have seen above and again on the C type bracteates subgroup that we are now going to study?

The Odin subgroup - C type

The Odin subgroup shows a bird in front of a man's head, often with its beak in the head's hair, along with various fantasy animals, as scholars claims.

We see the same or similar animal symbolism on a large number of gold bracteates. I have selected *six of a common type*. Four of those have a bird in front of their heads, **IK 172**, from Sletner in Eidsberg, Østfold, south-eastern Norway, **IK 96,1** from Kläggerud in Scania, Sweden (eight with same motif found in four places), **IK 2** from Ågedal in Agder, southern Norway, and **IK 377,1** from Vadstena in eastern Sweden. The runic text on the latter is not readable.

The last bracteate, **IK377,1** and **IK106**, from Lilla Istad, Slättbo, on Öland in Sweden (last row to the right) also have *a large U on the animal's head*. The jewel **IK 276** from Høyvik, in Helgheim, Jølster in the Vestland county, Norway, *has two ears*. What could these symbols possible mean?





Last row: IK276 from Høyvik in Vestland (left) and IK106 from Lilla Istad on Öland (right).

The four first bracteates have a bird sitting on the large U or on the animal's long ears. This is probably a message that the person to be initiated will fly through the air like a bird and lifted up to heaven.

The large U on the head of the animals (in IK 377,1 and IK 106), could possibly refer to the two pillars on earth that the animal (i.e. the god) is now aiming at to bring the dead warrior through. This also goes for the two distinct ears with dots on top on IK 276 which may show two stars on top of two pillars, the pillars of Gemini.

As on the A type medallions, the hair splendor can hold the key to this riddle: We see that the hair stands high above the head and is strongly marked with vertical lines or strokes. The hair has a design that differs markedly from the hair of the heads of the god Thor's subgroup, as we shall soon see. On the IK 96,1 (above), the hair seems to consist of some wide sticks.

I have argued in my books mentioned above, that in the old religion, the dead warrior or candidate during his initiation to the god, symbolically traveled to heaven with Odin, to his door in the east. This happens through a symbolic journey of 1 ½ turns of the circle up to the gate of heaven. In the religious poem *Grimnesmál* this is pretended as 540 doors, or degrees of the circle, = 360 + 180 degrees. The door is called *Valgrindi*, meaning "The slain warrior's door", in this poem.

The hair is closely connected to the brain where the soul resides. The mane of hair and the bands and lines that run through it must have had a special meaning. Could the vertical lines show a set of steps from the ground and to the earthly door of heaven, which was called *Hlidskjalv* in Norse mythology, meaning “Gate tower”? It probably consisted of four posts with an altar.

I believe traces of *Hlidskjalv* may have been the four posts in the ground at the east entrance to the ring-shaped courtyard at Sausjord in Voss municipality, western Norway. Such ring-shaped courtyards were common in Norway from the first centuries of our era and they were used until the Viking Age. And, could the candidate who was to be initiated to Odin, ascend the stairs of the tower, *Hlidskjalv*? And from there make his symbolic journey up to Odin’s door in heaven in the northeast?

Back to the jewels above: Another symbolism enters from the back of the human head: The hair turns into horizontal lines that goes into a circle and a hair knot, before the lines again emerge and ends in a point. Could this symbolize the Journey that the dead warrior or the candidate in the rite is now going through?

If this was so, we can see that this journey on the jewels above, ends near the four pillars in the east; the horse's rump is always drawn with four lines and ends abruptly. On the jewel IK96,1 above, the horse rump is drawn with four vertical lines ending in sort of table or perhaps an altar. The animal’s hind leg points to this and up to the northeast. The hair behind the neck of the head is missing, instead we see a turn with small circles or dots.

If we take my interpretation or assumptions as a basis here, we will see that the soul, in the hair splendor, reaches the door of heaven in the northeast which is marked with four pillars. The four pillars are probably the symbol of the constellation the Serpent Bearer, Odin’s door to heaven.

The journey of the vast majority of bracteates is from right to left, or from east to west. The motif shows that Odin's four pillars stand in the east. This corresponds to the zodiac sign of the Serpent Bearer. To the west stand the two pillars of Thor, the Gemini sign on the Milky Way. This is marked with a large U or the animal’s ears with bullets on top.

The soul or spirit may have resided in the head of the candidate, so that the bracteates show the symbol of a spiritual journey up to Odin’s door in heaven. The symbolism we see on these bracteates may be the same or similar to what we see in the drawing of the Freemason's journey on page 14.

Mime's head, that helped Odin in respect of wisdom and judgement, comes also to mind in this context. Mime was very wise and was sent to the Vanir gods as a hostage to keep the peace. The Vanir, who in accordance with their vertical understanding, lived in the underworld were, however, not satisfied with him; they cut off his head and returned it to the Æsir gods. "The realization of the knowledge that the Æsir constantly claimed that Mime possessed first took place as a result of a stay in the underworld, a death and return to the overworld in a new form that expresses pure intellect," says Danish historian of religion Jens Peder Schjødt.¹³

Below, I have selected three more of the C type jewels that have runic texts that provide additional information.

The bracteate **IK 43** (below) is from **Darum near Ribe in West Jutland in Denmark**. Here we see that the animal can resemble a bird, with its legs appearing to have bird-like thighs rather than claws, and the legs end with something resembling a fish tail. Moreover, "a bird" is depicted below the head of the "bird animal". The animal's head is also strange, is this supposed to be a snake's head? The wings of "the bird" below the animal are strange, it seems to turn around in a circle for more than 360 degrees. Is the bird animal lifting the warrior 1 ½ turn of the circle up to heaven?



43 b

¹³ Jens Peter Schjødt, *Odins viden – dens funksjon og betydning*. 2004, s 49. Ligger på nettet

Here are two runic texts: The runes to the right are interpreted as *niujil*, which means “newcomer, young innovator”. This must be the designation of someone who has just been initiated in the rite, the person we call *recipient* or *candidate* in Freemasonry.

The text in front of the candidate's head: *alu*, can be a cultic and magical formula, the meaning is uncertain, it is usually explained as “ale, alcoholic drink”. The word's basic meaning may be rage and ecstasy. According to the bracteate scholars Karl Hauck and Morten Axboe, *alu* is explained as “sorcery produced by the one in ecstasy”.¹⁴ Other scholars have linked the name to Odin's son *Olnir*. The bracteate must be associated with Odin.

The *niujil*, the candidate, is probably transported up to heaven by the bird animal which is Odin.

The jewel **IK 58 from Funen in Denmark** (below) shows a bird in front of the candidate's head. Below the bird there is a large U form, which I believe is the symbol of the earthly pillars that the candidate is to be transported through. The bird points to travelling through the air. Here too, its wings seem to turn in a circle for more than 360 degrees.

The “horse” is a fantasy animal with “fish tails” for legs and a snake’s head. This is one of the few bracteates where more than the candidate's head is shown, here we see his left arm and his hand: The animal, probably Odin, is leading the candidate by his left hand and arm (as we shall later see in Freemasonry).

Here, we see the same or similar symbolism as mentioned above: The “steps”, that form the hair splendor, end at the ear, where it changes direction and forms a circle or knot that turns into braids towards the north-east and with three points that touches the edge of the jewel. The horse's left hind leg also points to this place; this might be understood as the fourth point. Just inside this place in north-east, we can see the horse's tail drawn with four lines. I believe that the tail, which ends in “a flat” and also points towards the north-east, has been the symbol of the four pillars with a table or altar. If so, this may have symbolized the zodiac sign of the Serpent Bearer, Ophiuchus, Odin’s door to heaven.

¹⁴ Karl Hauck, Morten Axboe, Klaus Düwel and others, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit*, 1985, IK 1, text p 85 and p 54



IK 58

There are three texts on the gold bracteate:

Text I, which stands under the animal's head, reads: *HouaR*, it can be translated with The High One. This text is associated with Odin, referring to the animal Odin who transports the candidate's soul and the dead warrior's soul to heaven.

Text II: ... *laþu*... (only this can be deciphered in the long text to the left). This may be Old Norse *lod* = invitation, or as it has been explained: "invitation of superhumans powers".¹⁵ This is in accordance with the motif on the jewel.

Text III: *alu*, which can mean ecstasy, rage, as we saw above, also one of Odin's attributes.

The rune Anzus or Ass, ᚦ, has been carved into the jewel; this is not shown on the drawing.¹⁶ This was Odin's rune.

The bracteate **IK 98 from Køge on Zealand in Denmark** (below), also has a runic inscription.

¹⁵ Karl Hauck, Morten Axboe, Klaus Düwel and others, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit*, 1985, IK 1, text p 83

¹⁶ Hauck, Axboe, Düwel and others, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit*, 1985, IK 1, text p 110



IK 98

We see that the animal has four “fish feet”, with three and two round circles (dots) between them. This is presumably the symbol of water or rain. Perhaps these “fish feet” were intended to be used in water? The animal has a large U on its head, most likely the symbol of the two pillars in the southwest. The animal’s head is strange; it has a long tongue sticking out. I believe this must be a snake's head. It looks like a bird is sitting behind the figures head, could it be the beak that we see here?

The runic text on this bracteate reads as follows: *Hariuha haitika farausia gibu auja*, which is interpreted as: Hariuha is my name, farausia or *farvisa*, gives the god's protection or *heill*. *Farvisa* can mean travel expert, travel wise or used to travelling. *Gibu* means gives. *Auja* is a magical formula for help, divine protection or *heill*. This has been interpreted as a formulaic name for the god, presumably Odin.¹⁷

The runic text is however, followed by four dots, which presumably have marked the *four pillars*, and then *a tree*. Just inside the four dots or pillars there is the horse’s rump with its four lines. The left back leg of the animal and its rump, points directly to the four dots (the four pillars) that I assume is the symbol for *the heavenly door* in the northeast, as I have shown above and, in my book, “Med hester til himmelen - Osebergskipet og den norrøne religionen”. Could *the tree* point to “the word tree”, which was the Milky Way and probably

¹⁷ Hauck, Axboe, Düwel and others, *Die Goldbrakteaten der Völkerwanderungszeit*, 1985, IK 1, text, p 175

Valhalla in Norse religion? The heavenly gate, the constellation the Serpent Bearer, Ophiuchus, “hangs on” the world tree in the north-east, and this was the door Valgrindi to Valhalla in the Norse religious tradition, as we have seen.¹⁸ Notice that “the four pillars” and the tree is situated up to the right on the jewel, the north-eastern direction. The tree looks like an arrow, pointing to the north-east. The head’s hair differs somewhat from the hair on the other similar jewels, but the symbolism on the jewel is the same.

Odin brought the dead warriors up to the constellation the Serpent Bearer, which was the door Valgrindi, leading to Valhalla. This might be the reason why so many “animals” had a serpent-like head and a long tongue.

The runic text and symbols on the bracteate from Køge on Zealand in Denmark, could then mean: *Hariuha travels to the gate of the world tree, and the god Odin provides protection on the soul's journey.*

The text fits very well with the motif on the gold bracteate and my latest findings on the religion.

Probably the warriors, who were initiated in the rite to Odin, wore such jewels around their neck; in the same way as the Freemason today wears his jewels in a blue band around his neck. Textile impressions have been found on many bracteates.

The newly admitted or accepted brother, the recipient or candidate in Freemasonry, was called *niujil*, the newcomer, 1500 years ago, if we are to believe the jewel from Darum on West Jutland above. And the bracteate found in Køge in Zealand above, belonged to the warrior *Hariuha*. Today the bearers would probably have been Freemasons of the Fellow Craft, or second degree in Freemasonry.

Back to The Journey in Freemasonry’s second degree

Could the steps up to Hlidskjalf and the subsequent spiritual journey to the then Valhalla, that we see in the 400-500s CE, have inspired to the invention of "the winding stairs" in Freemasonry that we saw on page 13? Medieval documents from England tell us that the rites of “The Craft,” Freemasonry, were altered during the reign of King Athelstan in the 920s.¹⁹ It was probably at that time King Solomon and his temple in Jerusalem were brought into the

¹⁸ Arvid Ystad, *Med hester til himmelen, Osebergskipet og den norrøne religionen*, Oslo, 2025, p. 64-65, 130 - 152, 163-166

¹⁹ Albert G. Mackey, *The History of Freemasonry*, The York Legend, New York, 1996, p.95

Masonic rituals, while Odin's Valhalla was removed from the old Norse initiation rites that the Vikings had brought with them to the British Isles.

Now back to the picture of the Freemason's Journey that we saw above (p 14), and see what *Duncan's Ritual of Freemasonry* says about his journey. This is the candidate's second reception and the completion of the degree. The journey starts from the ante-room: ... *The Conductor then opens the Lodge door, and, taking the candidate by the left arm (as on the bracteate IK 58 from Funen in Denmark above), he leads him forward through the door in front of the pillars. (...) The conductor addresses the candidate and tells that "...we are now about to make an ascent through a porch, by a flight of winding stairs, consisting of three, five and seven steps, to a place representing the Middle Chamber of King Solomon's Temple, there to receive instructions relative to the wages due, and Jewels of a Fellow Craft". (...)*

The conductor leads the candidate on the journey, from the pillars, and to the first three steps, then five and at last with seven steps, while holding long speeches about objects possibly connected to these numbers. On the three first steps he says, among other wise words: *"The first three allude to the three principal stages of human life; namely youth, manhood, and old age. In youth, as Entered Apprentices, we ought industriously to occupy our minds in the attainment of useful knowledge. In manhood, as Fellow Crafts, we should apply our knowledge to the discharge of our respective duties to God, our neighbours, and ourselves; so that in old age, as Master Masons, we may enjoy the happy reflections consequent on a well-spent life, and die in the hope of a glorious immortality"*.

The ritual says clearly that we can *"hope of a glorious immortality"* and this is attainable in the third degree!

Several passages in the ritual's text have references to King Solomon's Temple, but this has no influence on what happens to the candidate. I am therefore not showing them here.

The conductor and the recipient are after a while leaving the stairs and soon arrives at the Junior Wardens station in the south (to the right in the picture). He is now supposed to be the doorkeeper to the outer door of King Solomon's Temple. The candidate (actually the conductor) gives the password and later the token, which is the pass grip of a Fellow Craft. "They now pass around the Junior Warden's station, and go to the Senior Warden's station in the west, ...". They are on their way to the inner door of the Middle Chamber of King Salomo's Temple, "which appears to be guarded by the Senior Warden in the west." The candidate (the conductor) has to give the real grip and the password of the grade to get inside. They pass on to the Worshipful Master in the east. This place is representing the

Middle Chamber of King Solomon's Temple, where he is received and recorded as a Fellow Craft Freemason.

Let us sum up and see *what this might have been in the elder Scandinavian rite*: The candidate arrives, after having left the stairs, to *the outer door* of King Solomon's Temple. The doorkeeper here is the Junior Warden. Was he, in the old Scandinavian rites, the former luminous god of the Divine Twins, which used to be Odin? If so, the door was probably the constellation The Serpent Bearer "hanging" east on the Milky Way.

The candidate goes further in the lodge room and arrives in the west where the two pillars stand. This is now *the inner door* to the Middle Chamber and the Senior Warden is the gatekeeper. Could the Senior Warden in the formerly rite, have been the other of the Divine Twins, the god of thunder, Thor? I think so!

The candidate is lead to the east, to the Worshipful Master, where he is expected and given food and drinks and his jewel and is recorded as a Fellow Craft. Here is no door. The doors belonged to the Junior and Senior Wardens who probably played the roles of the Divine Twins in the Migration Period.

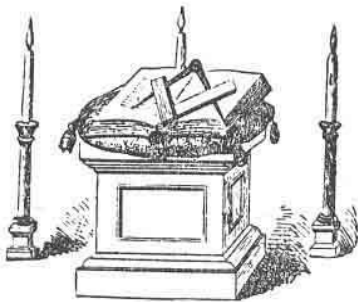
Back to the Freemason's ritual: The candidate now gets his wages, food and refreshments which denote peace, harmony and strength. He also gets the jewels of the degree in a band around his neck. The Worshipful Master says, among other things: "*Numerous worlds are around us, all formed by the same Divine Artist, and which roll through the vast expanse, and are all conducted by the same unerring law of nature. A survey of nature and the observation of her beautiful proportions, first determined man to imitate the Divine plan, and study symmetry and order.*"

Could this point to a celestial and cosmic existence that may have an old Scandinavian origin? Most of the other passages in the ritual have references to King Solomon's Temple. Could the quotes here have originated in the ancient rites from the Migration Period or earlier? It is impossible to confirm this, but the content in the passages seems quite cosmic and universal.

The Worshipful Master ends the second degree with talking to the candidate, the newcomer, about the letter "G" which "*has a higher signification; it alludes to the sacred name of Deity*". All in the lodge rise to their feet; and all bow their heads. The letter "G", however, as we can see on the picture above, written with runes, is the rune Ass, ᚦ, which used to be Odin's rune. This rune was carved in on the bracteate IK58 from Funen above.

It is also intriguing to see that the candidate's journey in the room makes 1 ½ turns of a circle, from the west to the east, back to the west and that he finally ends at the Worshipful Master in the east. Also, the candidate's journey in the first degree of Freemasonry is 1 ½ turns of the circle. So also, is the symbol of the stem of the Oseberg ship: the stem makes 1 ½ turns of a circle and ends with a serpent's head, probably pointing to the constellation The Serpent Bearer, which used to be Odins door in heaven.

The lodge meeting and the candidate ends here, at the Worshipful Master, which probably used to be Odin. The altar with the three (formerly four) pillars stands in the East, they belonged to the god.

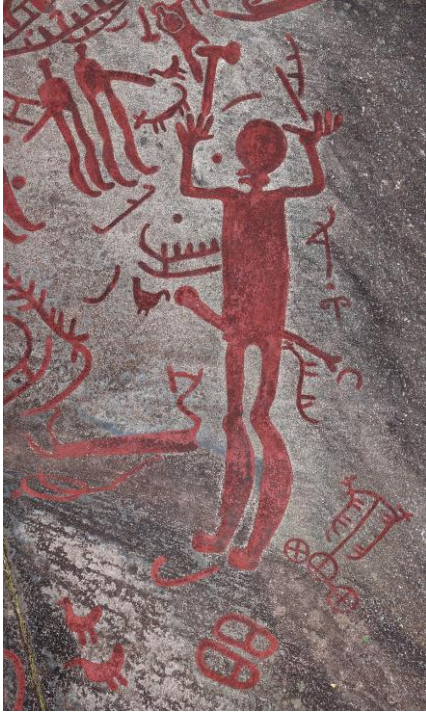


The newcomer or *niujil* is “in his old age” ready for his last degree, the degree to Thor, the god of thunder. Here are rebirth and a new life – here is immortality.

The King's medallions in the Rite of the Thunder God

Let's first go far back in time, to the Bronze Age, and look at a rock carving. “The great giant”, often thought to be a god, found in rock carvings in Backa in Brastad in Lysekil, Bohuslän in western Sweden, has been called “the shoemaker” by the local population. He has his arms raised and a hammer in his right hand.²⁰ His arms are held in the same way as we saw on the tapestry from Jamtli in Östersund and as the Masonic “Grand Hailing Sign of Distress” (p 10). Notice the figure's erected penis; this is a sign of fertility.

²⁰ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rock_carvings_in_Backa



Could the “shoemaker”, the giant or the god, have been a forerunner of the God of Thunder, the later Thor?

An A Type jewel from Scania – the god Thor’s jewel?

The A type gold bracteate found in **Scania in Sweden, IK 326**, has a jump ring at the top for a band to hang it around the neck.

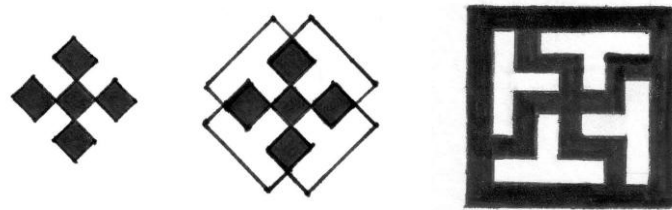


IK 326

Who might this be? Let's first have a look at the symbolism.

The symbols under the figure's arms are interesting. Under his right arm there is a swastika ending with small rings or bullets. What meaning hides in the swastika?

Below are some drawings of common hammer symbols from the Viking age: To the left are four hidden hammer marks; in the middle filled in so that we clearly see the four hammers with short handles towards the middle. To the right, we see the four hammers laid with the handles slightly offset towards the middle; as such the four hammers appear as a swastika. On the gold bracteates, the bullets or round dots at the ends of the arms of the swastika are probably impact marks. The hammer is usually held in the right hand, as is the case for the bracteate above.²¹



A U is marked next to the swastika, and below both arms of the figure. This sign could, as we have seen above under the rite to Odin, symbolize the two pillars (p 6,13). And this is exactly the sign the figure is showing with his both arms (pillars) and hands (stars).

Could the inverted S under his left elbow be the symbol for his journey? Along the edge on the gold bracteate there are several signs with twisted characters which resemble an inverted S. Does this indicate a journey around the edge? Later we will see that an inverted or swinging S is probably the symbol of the journey that the candidate undertakes during initiations to Freya.

The often oversized hair, can probably, also in this rite of the god of thunder, correspondingly symbolize “steps” that the candidate in the initiation rite or the soul of the deceased, takes down to earth. Note that “the steps” goes from the east, from the figure's forehead, to the west, and from there to the south. Here we see a large "arrow" or perhaps a “road”, that leads down to the neck of the figure. Could this be “the road” where the souls of the deceased warriors descend in the southwest. The head is the god Thor.

If the arms of the god are to represent the two pillars, we see that the soul of the dead, and probably the candidate in the rite, descends to this place located by the southwestern pillar. More on this symbolism later.

²¹ Arvid Ystad, *The Freemasons in the Viking Age*, Oslo, 2025, p. 287-295

I see the figure on the jewel IK326 from Scania, as the sovereign god Thor who rules in the west and gazes toward the east. The prevailing wind direction in Northern Europe is from west to east, or rather from southwest to northeast. Thus, the god brought the wind with the fertile rain, snow, and hail from the west to plants, animals, and humans in the east, and he also stood for their rebirth.

The gold bracteate IK 326 from Scania above, may thus have been a jewel that one of the officers wore in a band around their necks when performing the rite to the god of thunder in the 400s CE. I assume that it was the officer acting as the god Thor that wore the bracteate. It is probably the Senior Warden in Freemasonry that has taken over the god's role in the ancient rites. Today they wear the plumb in a band around their necks.

Freemasonry's Third Degree

Duncan's Ritual of Freemasonry tells what happens to the candidate in third degree, (that used to be the former Thor's rite, but is now supposed to take place in King Solomon's Temple): After being initiated to the god at the altar; the second section of the ritual that starts at the hour "High twelve", tells that the candidate is lead around in King Solomon's Temple when he is attacked by three ruffians. The third ruffian in the northeast gives him a blow by a maul to his head that "kills" him (" - *Is he dead? - He is, his skull is broken in* "). He is then lifted up and carried on the shoulders of 12 brothers around the hall "three times" (2 ½ times) in the direction of the sun, before he is placed "in a grave" to the right of the southwestern pillar (he is laid on the floor). The 12 brothers plus the Senior and Junior Warden, now form a circle around the "dead mason" while the Worshipful Master performs the *Great Hailing Sign of Distress*, which is likely the sign of the god Thor. We saw this sign above on page 10. The candidate is raised by the Worshipful Master at the southwestern pillar. He is reborn.²² We can see the large similarities with my assumptions on the IK 326 from Scania above.

A southern tradition?

We have already seen medallions that the high king may have used during the initiation rites to the twin gods (IK 47,2, IK 351, and IK 286) and to Odin's rite, (IK 262) and to the god of thunder, (IK 256): However, other kings may have worn other types of bracteates around their

²² *Duncan's Ritual of Freemasonry*, New York, 1866, p 116-120, 107

necks during initiations. These may have been earlier, later, more developed versions, or objects originating from other local traditions.

On **IK 259** (below), we see one of four fairly similar bracteates that were found in a woman's grave within a burial ground near **Erfurt in Germany**, which contained 13 graves and a horse burial. Karl Hauck classifies this to the B-type. (The others were found at Gudme in Denmark, at Oberwerschen and at Welschingen in southern Germany).

The motif probably depicts the god Thor seated on his high seat, with an apron, as it is called by the Freemasons, draped over his lower body, decorated with stripes. He raises both hands, with his elbows bent at right angles. Above Thor's right hand we see the swastika, interpreted as a concealed symbol of the god's four hammers. Below his right hand are two Thor's hammers. Above Thor's left hand appears a figure with three branches ending in three spheres, which likely symbolizes three raindrops and thus the sacred rain.²³



Along the right side of the medallion, there are four strange symbols, a kind of inverted U, their openings pointing downward, to “the earth”. They resemble what I assume are wombs in Freya's rite, as we shall see later. Can four blows of Thor's hammer bring fertility and regeneration from four wombs? The god Thor was responsible for lightning, rain, hail and thus fertility of nature and for rebirth of the humans! Could the possible wombs pictured on the bracteate be one of the reasons for placing it in a woman's grave, as was the case here?

²³ The same symbol is found on a belt in a man's grave in Finland, dated to 650 -750 AD. Here it is considered to be the sign of the thunder god. Unto Salo, Ukko, The god of Thunder of the ancient Finns and His Indo-European Family, Washington, 2006, p 144

The numbers two and four recur in this imagery. These numbers are traditionally associated with the thunder god, from India to Scandinavia.²⁴

A jewel showing the candidate struck down?

The gold medallion **IK 350** of the B type (below), was found in **south-west Germany**. It may have been worn by the king during initiations to the god of thunder. Here we see the god of thunder (Thor) with a large and decorated (striped) apron over his lower body, sitting in his high seat with a belt around his waist. On both sides of his seat are his two pillars. These are well known from the much later Norse Sagas.



350 b

What might the motif on the gold medallion IK350 express? I see significant similarities with the actions performed in the central parts of Freemasonry, where the Freemason is struck down in the northeast and resurrected in the southwest after being carried 2 ½ times around the hall.

The god's left hand consists of a sort of semicircle (an iron glove?), and then three hammers with their handles pointing toward the center. The arm and hand point up toward the

²⁴ Gamkrelidze, Thomas V. and Ivanov, Vjaceslav V., *Indo-European and the Indo-Europeans*, Berlin, New York, 1995

northeast. Directly beneath the arm, we see three slanted crosses, likely hammer blows. I assume these represent the three blows that the warrior (the Freemason) is given to his head and that "kills him". Just above the three hammers, we see something resembling a crescent moon, but which is likely a womb "receiving" the soul of the deceased.

The warrior's soul wanders westward along the 14 "steps of the stairs" (the Freemason is carried), which are formed by the god's hair splendor. It then passes through the loop in the west and returns along the narrow path between the two sections of hair, above and below. The soul of the deceased wanders (the Freemason is carried) on the lower or "second staircase" within the hair, from northeast to northwest. Here, there are 12 steps. During these journeys, the soul of the warrior (the Freemason) passes the gods of the zodiac in the sky. (We shall see more of this symbolism later, on IK45, where we also find 14 gods).

The soul of the warrior thus wanders $2\frac{1}{4}$ times around the zodiac from northeast to northwest, before descending an additional quarter-turn of the circle down to the southwest. The wombs along the edge indicates this. The soul of the warrior makes a journey $2\frac{1}{2}$ turns of the circle. Here, by the southwestern pillar, the fallen warrior (and the Freemason) is laid in their grave.

The god Thor, with his mighty right hand, raises or pulls the candidate up with his iron chain with three hammers in both ends. We see the soul of the warrior (the Freemason) at the bottom of the chain; the multi-pointed star was the symbol of the soul.²⁵ It is near the southwestern pillar that the fallen warrior was resurrected in Germany in the 400s CE, and it is still here where the candidate in Freemasonry is resurrected.

I interpret the gold medallion IK 350 as belonging to the kings' and chieftain's jewels when they initiated the candidate in Thor's fertility and resurrection rite. The chieftain probably wore the gold jewel in a band around his neck.

The god Thor's rite was extremely popular with the independent Norwegian farmers. Here it was the chieftains among them, called *gode* later on Iceland, who played the god in the initiations.

Why is the Freemason struck down three times and not four when Thor's hammers usually show four blows? The Edda tale *Thor's Journey to Útgard* tells that Thor struck Útgard-Loki with three blows. But when he was about to deliver the fourth and finish him off, he was gone. The fourth blow was fatal. That the Worshipful Master, who played the god,

²⁵ A star is often the symbol of spirit or soul. J.E. Cirlot, *A Dictionary of Symbols*, 1978, star, p 309

delivers three blows in Freemasonry must indicate that these blows were intended for initiations only.

Now, let us return to the C-type bracteates.

C Types - The Thor's rite bracteates?

As previously mentioned, I have divided the C type bracteates into a group where a bird is sitting at the front of the head, and a group where a swastika is found in front of the forehead. The last group, that we will look at now, can be linked to initiations to the god of thunder, probably called Thor also in the Migration period.

On far the most bracteates, the four-legged animal travels from right to left, or from east to west. This applies to both subgroups, to the initiates in both the Odin rite and the Thor rite. I believe the reason for this is that the door of heaven, the Serpent Bearer, stands in the east of the Milky Way where the dead warrior's soul and the soul of the candidate who is to be initiated to Odin, ascend through. In the west on the Milky Way, stands the constellation of Gemini, or the Twins. Below on earth, we find the two pillars in the west of the Freemasons halls. Here the warrior was reborn and the candidate in the third degree resurrected. We shall soon see the symbols of this.

Below are three images of bracteates (IK357, IK301 and IK330) with the swastika in front of the human head, found in Eastern Jutland and in Seeland in Denmark²⁶, and one (IK45b), with the swastika behind the head. (We will come back to the fourth bracteate down to the right, later).

The hair on the human heads also has "steps of a staircase", as I see it. On the first three bracteates, the long hair changes abruptly character and dips down before it turns upwards in a type of pointed triangle. Could this perhaps symbolize the bud of a plant that sticks up from the ground in spring, thus representing rebirth and new life?

Two of the three runic texts are legible, both are an abbreviation for *laukaR*, which is a magical formula word with the meaning of "flourish, fertility".

²⁶ IK 357 from Mols, Eastern Jutland, IK 301 from Magelmose, Seeland and IK 330 from Seeland



The three first horses or animals points their left hind leg towards the northeast, indicating that the journey with the animal is coming from the northeast. The animal on the bracteate IK 301, has no large U on its head, but points its left foreleg (and its tongue) towards the southwest; this is probably the direction of the journey. The animal's ears and the two small dots on top of the ears (under the nose of the head), probably also refer to the stars and the pillars of the earthly Gemini constellation, the two pillars in the west. I believe that the large U on the other animal's skulls, also points towards the earthly pillars, to the outermost pillar on its skull, to the southwestern pillar in the hall.

The large U and the swastika are generally quite close on most bracteates, both are seemingly the symbols of the god Thor.

The four-legged animal with the warrior's soul was probably on their way to the southwestern pillar, the southernmost of the pillar U on the animal's head. Here is the candidate in Freemasonry raised and reborn, even today.

Below are two C type bracteates, **IK 28,1 and 2** with the same motif, found in Börringe in Svedala municipality about 25 km east of Malmö in Scania. The photo on the right shows that this bracteate had a much wider border zone around the motif, otherwise the motives are the same. What do we see here?



The horse has long legs and we see both the swastika and the large U in front of the human head and the animal. We also see that the hair splendor on both motifs, which probably refers to the steps of the soul, turns into a thin, long spiral with more turns of the circle after the back of the head. It goes into a sort of whirlpool.

A triangle made of three dots is to be found behind the head and between the front legs of the horse. We shall come back to these triangles shortly.

The photo on the right shows that the motif itself is surrounded by two - three inner circles, but the innermost, third circle disappears right in front of the large U and the horse's head. Could this indicate a 2 ½ times circumambulation? Is the warrior's soul riding on the horse, on a journey around the sanctuary, before arriving at the southwestern pillar? This is the outermost pillar of the large U.

In the drawing of the motif on the left, IK 28,2, we see that the two innermost rings in front of the horse's head, front leg and the large U, are drawn differently. Here are no rings, do the rings dissolve here?

I believe that these bracteates show the same symbolism as we saw in Freemasonry, with a 2 ½-round circumambulation before the candidate is laid in the "tomb" at the southwestern pillar of the lodge. If this is correct, what symbolic journey might the soul of the dead warrior and the Freemason have had? And still has?

The answer may be found in the motif of the golden bracteate, **IK45**, that we saw above on page 34 from **Åkerbo on Öland in Sweden**. This head is larger than the heads on other bracteates. It also has a larger hair splendor which has an upper part and a lower part divided by a pearl band.

I interpret the lower part as steps in "a staircase", then follows a circular hair knot that probably points to a more than one turn of the circle, before the hair ends in the northeast, just above the four long lines from the horse's rump that probably symbolize the four pillars. This symbolism points to the Odin's rite.

The uppermost "staircase" ends behind the head, but here we find the swastika, the hammer symbol of Thor. I therefore believe the owner of this bracteate must have been initiated to Thor as well as to Odin, to both the Divine Twins.

Now to the symbolic journey of the Thor's rite: In front of the head is a circular round plate with 14 smaller dots in a band along the edge. This symbol is placed right in front of his head (instead of the swastika) where the soul rests. That means it was important. Could this circle, like the circle with the hair knot behind the head, refer to a celestial journey around the zodiac, here with 14 gods and that the god on the bracteate that guides him on the journey is the 15th?

Here we might see the same religious tradition as we saw in Freemasonry where 12 brothers ("gods") carried the Freemason 2½ times around the room and then formed a circle together with the Senior and Junior Warden. They all stood around the "dead" Freemason when the Worshipful Master, as the 15th, raised him.

On the Oseberg ship from Vestfold, where the burial ceremony took place in the early 800s CE, 15 dead horses lay on the foredeck or in front of the ship and 15 pair of oars was found on the ship. I have also found the seemingly same symbolism with 15 horses and animals on the Viking Age carpet IB from Jamtli in Östersund in Sweden. The gods had

probably transformed themselves into horses on the ship to help the deceased to heaven and to rebirth.

The bracteate IK62, (not shown here) found on Gotland in Sweden, has a similar motif to IK 45 above. The circular round plate in front of this head has 10 dots in the band along the edge and his upper hair splendor has 11 “shells” with similar size dots inside. Perhaps the religion on Gotland had fewer gods?

Otherwise, I believe that the symbolism in the circumambulations up to heaven and down may have been expressed in the circles around the edge on many bracteates, as we saw on IK 28,1 and 2. I have not gone further into this.

The motif of the **IK 1** (below), shows a man riding a horse or a four-footed animal with a tail, and with a swastika and a large U in front of the head. His hair is strong and erect and he has a braid at the back of his neck. These steps descend to the back of his head where the hair merges into a braid that abruptly rises upwards towards the northeast with three bullets. The round dots on top of his hair are probably raindrops, the symbol of fertility and regeneration. The animal's hooves do not touch the ground: this may indicate that the journey is a spiritual one.



The large U above the animal's head has probably represented the constellation Gemini or Twins. But why three dots on the pillars here?

Below the constellation Gemini on the Mily Way, there are three bright stars that forms the corners of an imaginary *winter triangle*. The stars Procyon, Sirius and Betelgeuse all shine brighter than the stars Castor and Pollux in the Gemini constellation. Procyon is the brightest star in the constellation Canis Minor (“lesser dog”, Latin). The constellation Canis Major contains Sirius, the brightest star in the night sky, also known as the “dog star”. Betelgeuse is a star in the constellation Orion, “the hunter”.

Can the three dots on top of the large U on the bracteate symbolize the winter triangle? And could the three dots on the bracteate IK 28,1 and 28,2 above also symbolize the same?

I also see the symbolism with the three stars as connected to the *hundingas*, the dog-clan or “the dogfighters”, the legendary tribe in early Germanic sources. They were probably the warriors of Thor in the Viking Age. Correspondingly, among the early Indo-Europeans we find the *wulfingas*, the “wolf-clan”. Just below Odin’s constellation, The Serpent Bearer, we find Lupus, the Wolf. Odin had his wolves, Gere and Freke in the Viking Age.

The 40 or so runes along the edge of the bracteate IK 1 from Ågedal are difficult to decipher. “The last interpretation assumes that the runic text reproduces some stanzas from a mythical poem about a journey describing how the dead arrive at the realm of the dead after a successful ride.”²⁷ I would rather guess “travel from” the realm of the dead.

The two gold bracteates found in the grave in Ågedal, IK 2 and IK 1, shows that the king or chieftain living here, probably was initiated to both Odin and Thor. He had second and third degree in Freemasonry, as we would say today.

Now to some other bracteates that may show both the Divine Twins.

C Type Jewels with the Divine Twins?

Below we see four bracteates that are quite similar. The top two, IK 109 and IK169, are from Eidsberg in Østfold, Norway, while the bracteate IK 363.2 is from Lilla Jored in Tanum parish in northern Bohuslän. IK 327, at the bottom right, was submitted from the estate of a high-ranking officer and was probably found in Scania.

²⁷Gro Mandt og Trond Lødøen, *Bergkunst, Helleristninger i Noreg*, Oslo, 2005, p 166



The bracteates show a human head with a stylized bird in front, similarly to what we saw above. The head hovers over two animals that are connected, one animal facing east and the other facing west. I assume we see here the neck and head of the two twin gods who lead the soul of the dead up to heaven in the northeast, and the neck and head of the other god who brings the dead back for rebirth in the southwest.

Now for details on the motifs: We see that the neck of the animal on the right rises up to the northeast and then makes a sharp turn of the neck before it turns back and forms a head with a strong "chin". This symbolizes probably the 1 ½ turns of the circle on the Freemason's journey to reach the god in the northeast.

On top of the heads is something that may resemble three small "pillars". Could this be the three pillars that we have seen earlier?

The head on the left shows a similar head that we have seen on the animal several times before, it may resemble a horse's head, snake's head or a bird's head. Above these heads we see the large U, but on the two last bracteates it stands on two small posts. I assume this is a further emphasis that the U symbolizes the two pillars of Gemini in the west. If my assumptions are correct, we see both the two pillars in the west and the three pillars in the east; these are still the most common symbols in the Masonic lodge rooms today. We saw above the three pillars around the altar in the east (p. 13 and 25).

The bracteates probably belonged to warriors or important people who were initiated into Odin's and Thor's rites.

Now we'll leave the C type bracteates and have a look at the D type bracteates. This is the second most common type of bracteate; 359 pieces have been found.

The D Type Bracteates - Freya's Jewels?

There may be reason to believe that these jewels show that the bearer has been initiated to the goddess Freya, which has become the first degree in Freemasonry and has given us the name Freemason.²⁸

Before we begin, I would like to say a few words about the ancient belief surrounding roosters and the awakening—or rebirth—into a new day. In the crowing of the rooster there was then, as now, a hope of awakening and a new day. A Byzantine source relates that Scandinavian warriors burned their dead after skirmishes with the emperor's troops and threw cockerels into the river flowing past. As late as the end of the 1700s, roosters were still sacrificed on burial mounds in Norway during the midsummer celebrations.²⁹ Midsommer celebrations were to the goddess Freya.

King Hadding in the underworld

Let us see what happened to King Hadding and his journey to the underworld, told by the Danish historian Saxo, who lived roughly at the same time as Snorri Sturlusson.

²⁸ Arvid Ystad, *The Freemasons in the Viking Age*, Oslo, Amazon, 2023, p 155-164

²⁹ Arvid Ystad, *The Freemasons in the Viking Age*, Oslo, Amazon, 2023, p 114

King Hadding was one winter evening sitting in the high seat in King Håkon's hall in Norway, when something strange happened. Suddenly he saw a woman emerge from the floor by the hearth. She had a fresh bouquet of flowers, which proved to be the poisonous hemlock, in her bosom.

Hadding wanted to know where she got the flowers from. The Woman (Freya, some believe) then took him under her cloak, and together they disappeared down into the earth. At this point, Saxo adds that he believes the gods of the underworld would show Hadding the places to which he would one day go when he died. (This may be understood as an initiation into Freya's cult.)

Through a damp and gloomy mist, they walked on a well-trodden path past some distinguished-looking people dressed in purple, before they finally arrived at the place where the fresh flowers grew. The sun was shining here, but the woman wanted to go on, and soon they came to a river. There were all sorts of weapons lying in the gray-black water that flowed fast and violently. From the bridge over the river, they could see two armies that fought – these were dead warriors that now relived their previous feats. They went on and finally reached a strong wall which they could not get over.

The woman then took a rooster that she brought with her, twisted its neck, and threw the head over the wall. Shortly afterwards, a rooster crows were heard from the other side: the rooster had been brought to life again at the wall. Here, at the wall, the rebirth took place. After this, Hadding went back to our world.³⁰

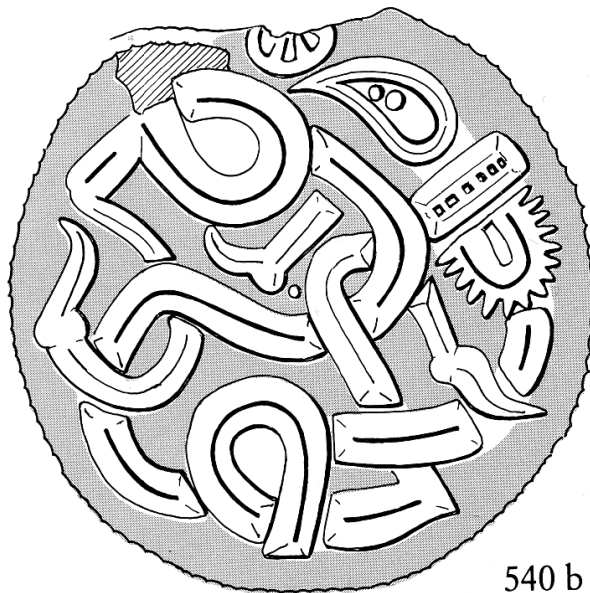
Now we will see how this story can be reflected in Freemasonry:

The candidate in Freemasonry is placed in a small chamber upon arrival, probably the symbol of Freya's womb. He is blinded and the "cabletow" is laid around his neck, which can be seen as the symbol of the umbilical cord. He gets a slipper on his right foot; the other is bare. Emerging from here, he is lead on his journey by the Master of Ceremonies in the York rite. He "sees the light" at the altar(wall) where the umbilical cord disappears. The candidate meets love at the altar (wall) and is symbolically reborn!

³⁰ Arvid Ystad, *The Freemasons in the Viking Age*, Oslo, Amazon, 2023, p 148



The bracteate IK 540 is now in the National Museum in Copenhagen. The pattern is typical of the D type bracteates, which are obviously full of symbolism. Below we see an enlarged motive.



540 b

What do we see here?

There are two slightly oval “loops” on the bracteate, one at the top left with the opening up to the northwest, as well as one at the bottom with the opening down. If my assumption that this

bracteate is associated with Freya holds true, these “loops” may represent the womb of the candidate's mother and the womb of Freya. These uteri can symbolize the births, i.e., that the owner has been “born twice”.

Up to the right, in the northeast, we see what may resemble a bird's head. It is stylized and ends in a pointed beak. I guess this is supposed to represent a rooster. Directly behind the head with the two eyes is a rectangle across the neck with six small square dots. Can this stand for the stone altar, the wall or *mur* in Norwegian, where it all took place? To the right of the stone altar there is something resembling half a cog wheel. Could this be the cock's comb?

A boot or a foot is depicted in the center of the gold jewel. This can be the symbol of the candidate 's journey. The shoe might be a parallel to the slipper the candidate in Freemasonry wears on his right foot today.³¹ Based on my perception of what has presumably happened during the Freya rituals, I think the big and inverted S ' symbolizes the twisted and winding journey the candidate must walk before he reaches his second birth (womb) with Freya. So, it might be Freya who leads him to the wall where the cock loses its' head.

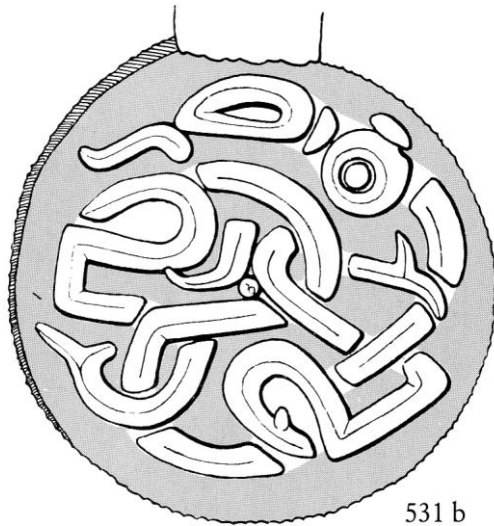
On the path where the candidate walks, there are three obstacles. These looks like arms coming out of the wombs with a feather or a knife at the end. The Freemason must pass three trials today, as he is lead 1 ½ times around the room, before he ends at the altar (wall) where he is initiated (the rooster was sacrificed). Is the feather or knife on this bracteate symbolically his trials?

The interpretations above may seem far-fetched for those of the readers who do not have a background in Freemasonry. For Freemasons, many bells will ring.

The vast majority of bracteates of this category have the same motif, more simply displayed or more complicated. Sometimes the beak is separated from the head, or the head sits on the cock, but the knife cuts the cock's neck. At several of the stone altars of ancient shrines in Norway, a knife has been found, probably for cutting the rooster's throat.

Below are some other gold bracteates of the D type:

³¹ Arvid Ystad, *The Freemasons in the Viking Age*, Oslo, 2025, p. 89-90



531 b

Denmark

IK 531 is found in Tapdrup, near Viborg in North Jutland,

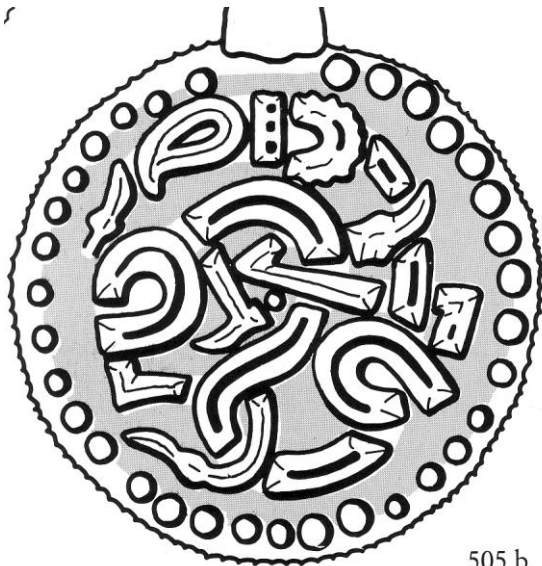


492,2 a



492,2 b

Photo of original bracteate and drawing, IK 492, from H rouvillette, grave 39, outside Caen in Normandy. A similar bracteate has been found in Kent. It is likely that the Vikings brought these with them and they were later placed as grave goods.



505 b

Nieder-Sachsen, Germany

IK 505 was found in Sievern, Wesermünde, in Cuxhafen,



455,1 b

A somewhat simpler bracteate, IK 455, from Killerup, near Odense, Funen, Danmark. The shoe is associated with the path the candidate walks. Here too there are three fences or obstacles in his path.



528 b

IK 528 is from Stenildvad, near Ålborg, North Jutland, Denmark. The wall is probably behind the bird's beak.

I conclude that the symbolism appearing on many of the gold medallions of the A types and most of the gold bracteates of the C and D types, are probably the same as, or similar to, the symbolism found in the first three degrees of Freemasonry today.