

A Medieval Coin Find from the Netherlands: Filling a Gap for Dorestad?

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In 2003 an interesting silver coin (Fig. 1) was found on the banks of the river Linge in the province of Gelderland.



Fig. 1 (x2)

Obv. X ARNOLFV in two pelleted circles. In the field a short cross. The coin is double struck which is visible particularly on the cross.

Rev. In the field a two line inscription: []ORES / TATAS

The letter preceding the O is off the flan. Some letters of the inscription from the obverse are visible incuse on the reverse.

1.54 g; 22 mm; die axis 90°

Most of the letters are created by using punches shaped like crescents and long rectangles. Some letters are composed from different punches.

The inscription ORES / TATAS recalls the coins of the important early medieval mint of Dorestad. This mint was very prolific in Merovingian and Carolingian times up to the tenth century.¹ The design and fabric is suggestive of a somewhat later date in the Carolingian period extending to the early eleventh century.²

The coin is different from known Carolingian coins of Dorestad in a number of ways, most notably the name of the mint is written in only two lines. Throughout the Carolingian period

¹ P. Grierson and M. Blackburn, *MEC* 1, pp. 125, 137, 146, 150–1, 201, 217, 223–5, 634–5; A.N. Zadoks-Josephus Jitta, 'De eerste muntslag te Duurstede', *JMP* 48 (1961), pp. 1–14; H. Enno van Gelder, 'De karolingische muntslag te Duurstede', *JMP* 48 (1961), pp. 15–42; M. Dolley, 'New light on the pre-1760 Coney Street (York) find of coins of the Duurstede mint', *JMP* 52/53 (1965/66), pp. 1–7; H. Enno van Gelder, 'Coins from Dorestad, Hoogstraat I', in W.A. van Es and W.J.H. Verwers, *Excavations at Dorestad I, The Harbour: Hoggstraat I* ('s-Gravenhage, 1980), pp. 212–24; S. Coupland, 'Dorestad in the ninth century: the numismatic evidence', *JMP* 75 (1988), pp. 5–26; S. Coupland, 'Money and Coinage under Louis the Pious', *Francia* 17/1 (1990), pp. 23–54; A. Pol, 'Un nouveau trésor mérovingien aux Pays-Bas', *BSFN* 44 (1990), pp. 698–702; S. Coupland, 'Trading places: Quentovic and Dorestad reassessed', *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002), pp. 209–32.

² During the eleventh century weights were reduced and the traditional cross which characterized the coins since the times of Louis the Pious in many cases abandoned. See P. Ilisch, 'Die Münzprägung in den Räumen Utrecht und Friesland im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert', *JMP* 84–85, 1997/8 [2000].

the name was usually written in three lines and this was the case with the last substantive issue in the name of Emperor Lothar. (Fig. 2) These coins have usually been attributed to Lothar I (817–840/55) but Enno Van Gelder has suggested that they could have been struck under Lothar II (855–69). This has been contested by Simon Coupland, who dates the issue to the early 850s.³ Either way the two line version of the mint name on the present coin strongly suggests that it is not just a barbarous copy of a late Carolingian issue.



Fig. 2 (x2)

The style of the lettering is also different from known Dorestad coins. In particular the punches have been used to shape the letter S in a different way. The same is true of the O and A though the E and R are closer in style to the usual Dorestad coins. The use of punches to facilitate the production of dies possibly started in Dorestad but soon became a common practice in many Carolingian mints.⁴ These differences could be explained as the work of different mint personnel and hence could indicate a date after 855. The diameter of the coin is 2 mm larger than the Dorestad coins with the mint's name in three lines. The weight of the coin is roughly about the same as the known Dorestad types.

In Dorestad the dies were made with square heads resulting in a die alignment which could be one of four ways.⁵ This technique was unique to Dorestad where it had been used for the temple type of Lothar and the preceding coinage of Louis the Pious (814–40).⁶ On our coin the die axis is 90 degrees which also points to Dorestad as the mint. Sometimes coins of the last decades of the ninth century were struck with over-used dies which again is the case with this coin.

Simon Coupland has argued that minting ceased at Dorestad around 855⁷ whereas van Gelder thought that it continued into the reign of Lothar II.⁸ We can not discuss the chronology of Lothar's coinage in Dorestad in detail here.

³ K.F. Morrisson and H. Grunthal, *Carolingian Coinage* (ANS NNM 158; New York, 1967), p. 160, no. 521; van Gelder, 'Karolingische muntslag', pp. 33, 36; Coupland, 'Dorestad in the ninth century', p. 21 (based on the occurrence of such coins in three hoards); Coupland, 'Trading places', p. 226.

⁴ Van Gelder, 'Karolingische muntslag', pp. 25–6.

⁵ Van Gelder 'Karolingische muntslag', pp. 26–7.

⁶ It is also to be observed on the pieces with blundered legends which were formerly regarded as Frisian imitations. This interpretation has been strongly rejected by Simon Coupland, 'The coinage of Lothar I. (840–855)', *NC* 161 (2001), pp. 157–99 at pp. 173–4; see also van Gelder 'Karolingische muntslag', p. 26; Coupland 'Trading places', p. 223; Grierson and Blackburn, *MEC* nos 819–20; A. Pol, 'Spectaculaire muntvondst uit de 9de eeuw', *De Beldenaar* 16 (1992), pp. 6–71 at p. 68.

⁷ Coupland 'Trading places', p. 226: 'there are no known Dorestad issues of Lothar II'.

⁸ Van Gelder 'Karolingische muntslag', pp. 27, 36 ('waarvan de aanmuntning in 875 nog in volle gang geweest moet zijn'), 42. Van Gelder, however, had thought that the three line-type with DOR – ESTA – TVS and the name of Lothar was struck in Frisia and not at Dorestad.

MINTING AUTHORITY AND DATING

The visible legend on the reverse of the coin is **XARNOLFV**. There is space on the coin to expand this to **XARNOLFVS REX** (king) or **xARNOLFVS IMP** (emperor). These are the obvious suggestions but the title **DVX** (duke), **COM** (count), **EPS** (bishop) or **A-B** (abbot) could theoretically fill the unreadable part of the text. It seems sensible to look for rulers named Arnold or Arnulf and then try to find the missing title. As a rule in the eleventh century generally coins from far away mints are unlikely to be found in the Netherlands apart from by the sea.

In chronological order the following persons have to be taken in consideration:

1. Arnulf of Carinthia (king 887–95; emperor 896–9). This Arnulf minted in many different places: Mainz, Toul, Thuin, Regensburg, Milan, Pavia and Rome as well as some unidentified mints.⁹ On his coins his name is spelled in three different ways: **ARNOLDVS**, **ARNVLFVS** and **ARNOLFVS**. Coins were minted during the time he was king and also during the time when he was emperor, so either the title **REX** or **IMP** can be present on his coins.
2. Arnulf (duke of Bavaria 911–37). Coins, minted in Regensburg, are known with **ARNVLFVS** and the title **DVX**.¹⁰ A coin is also known from him minted in Salzburg with the same spelling of his name and title.¹¹
3. Arnulf I count of Flanders (918–65).¹²
4. Arnulf II count of Flanders (964–88).

The following can be ruled out on account of the find spot and the high weight of the coin which would be unlikely after 1000:

1. Arnulf, bishop of Halberstadt (996–1023). Coins known with **ARNVLFVS** and **EPS**.¹³
2. Arnold I bishop of Worms (1044–65). Coins are known with **ARNOLDVS** and **EPS**.¹⁴
3. Arnold I of Falkenberg, abbot of Corvey (1051–5). One coin known with **ARNOLD** and **A-B**.¹⁵

The reading we are looking for (**ARNOLFVS**), only appears on the coins of Arnulf of Carinthia. Taking into account that the coin was most likely struck in the second half of the ninth century and bears the name of Dorestad, Arnulf of Carinthia seems to be the best candidate. Whether we must fill the space with **REX** or **IMP** is not clear and this will have to wait until another coin of this type is found.

Arnulf of Carinthia was born around 850. He was a grandson of Louis the German (emperor 840–76) and the son of the king of Bavaria Karloman (876–80). In 887 he was able to dethrone the seriously ill Charles III (the Fat) as ruler of the East Frankish Empire. When Charles died in 888 the division of the Carolingian Empire was sealed. In Italy, Burgundy, Lotharingia and Western Francia individual kings seized power. Lombardy was conquered

⁹ W. Hahn, 'Die Münzprägung des Königs und Kaisers Arnulf, genannt 'von Carinthia' (887–899)', *Money Trend* 37 no. 6, (2005), pp. 154–62.

¹⁰ H. Dannenberg, *Die Deutschen Münzen der Sächsischen und Fränkischen Kaiserzeit* (Berlin, 1876) nos 1046–47, 1049–51, 1699; W. Hahn, *Monetas Radasponensis. Bayerns Münzprägung im 9., 10. und 11. Jahrhundert* (Brunswick, 1976) p. 78, no.5.

¹¹ Dannenberg, *Sächsischen und Fränkischen Kaiserzeit*, no. 1127; Hahn, *Monetas Radasponensis*, p. 93, no. 86; Petr Veselý, 'Arnulf, vévoda Bavorský, v Čechách. Summary: Arnulf, der Fürst von Bayern in Böhmen', *NListy* 60 (2005) pp. 141–2.

¹² No coins bearing name of either Arnulf I or Arnulf II are known.

¹³ Dannenberg, *Sächsischen und Fränkischen Kaiserzeit*, nos 624–6.

¹⁴ Dannenberg, *Sächsischen und Fränkischen Kaiserzeit*, no. 851.

¹⁵ Dannenberg, *Sächsischen und Fränkischen Kaiserzeit*, no. 736.

and attached to Arnulf's territory in 894. In 896 Arnulf was crowned emperor by Pope Formosus (891–6). He died in Regensburg on 8 December 899.¹⁶

After the death of Lothar II Dorestad, as part of northern Lotharingia, was attached to East Francia under the rule of Louis the German by the treaty of Meerssen in 870. When Louis died in 876 Charles the Bald unsuccessfully tried to gain power in the eastern part of Lotharingia.¹⁷ After Charles' death in 877 the rulers of the Eastern Empire had seized all of Lotharingia by 880 and Arnulf naturally claimed to be the ruler of Lotharingia. In spring 888, however, Rudolf of Burgundy, was crowned as king in Toul (southern Lotharingia), but by the autumn he had been forced by Arnulf to give up his claims. In 891 Arnulf defeated the Vikings near Leuven. In 895 Zwentibold, Arnulf's very young son, was crowned as sub-king of Lotharingia.¹⁸

Three coins very similar to the one under discussion have been found before, one in Zaltbommel and two during excavations in Tiel. All three are from different dies. They are less well preserved and their weights are lower (1.35 and 0.61 g) than the present coin. Another piece, unfortunately badly chipped, has been found in excavation in Wijk-bij-Duurstede.¹⁹ The letters from the cross side on these pieces show a negative impression which led to the mistaken view that the two line city name was encircled by some unreadable letters. Since only an O and some strokes could be discerned it was thought to be a blundered HLVDVVICVSIMP – a legend which is known from other coins from the Netherlands.²⁰ This led to their being dated to the beginning of the tenth century²¹, which should now be corrected to the time of Arnulf.



Fig. 3 (x2)

This is some time after the latest literary mention of Dorestad which dates from 873 and describes a Viking raid. About this time the northern part of Dorestad at least lost its importance due to the fact that the river moved eastwards away from the settlement and the original

¹⁶ Cf. W. Störmer, in: *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, vol. I, p. 1013. F. Fuchs and P. Schmid (eds), 'Kaiser Arnolf. Das ostfränkische Reich am Ende des 9. Jahrhunderts. Regensburger Kolloquium 9.-11.12.1999' (= *Zeitschrift für Bayerische Landesgeschichte; Reihe B, Beiheft 19*), (Munich, 2002).

¹⁷ If the two Dorestad halfpennies of Charles the Bald mentioned by Peter Berghaus Berghaus in: *Hoops Reallexikon der germanischen Altertumskunde* 2nd ed., vol. 6, (Berlin – New York, 1986), p. 79 are really from this king, they can only be from around 876.

¹⁸ M. Hartmann, in: F. Fuchs and P. Schmid (eds), 'Kaiser Arnolf'.

¹⁹ Ilisch, 'Münzprägung in den Räumen Utrecht', p. 102-3. One of the Tiel coins was not weighed on account of its poor state of preservation. The low weight (0.61g) of the other may also have been due to its condition.

²⁰ Ilisch, 'Münzprägung in den Räumen Utrecht', p. 103, no. 7.2.

²¹ Ilisch, 'Münzprägung in den Räumen Utrecht', pp. 101–2, no. 7.1.

channel became an unimportant creek (*de kromme Rijn*). The distance between the harbour and the houses grew to such an extent that it was an obstacle to practical commerce.²²

The question remains whether the Dorestad coins of Arnulf were struck in the original main settlement of Dorestad or in the nearby *vicus* Wijk-bij-Duurstede.²³ In 896, still in the lifetime of Arnulf, the *ministeriales* of the Utrecht church in Tiel and Deventer obtained from king Zwentibold the same rights as they had had before in Dorestad.²⁴ These two rising places took over the role of Dorestad in the tenth century. This does not necessarily mean that Dorestad vanished completely.²⁵ Dorestad was an agglomeration of different nuclei of settlements between the northerly harbour on the Kromme Rijn and the southern part at the Lek (part of the Rhine estuary), of which only a part has been intensively excavated whereas in other parts the archaeological evidence is less clear.²⁶ Excavations in the area Hoogstraat III indicate that this harbour remained in use until the twelfth century.²⁷

To repeat: the coin type described here has a different design from that of Lothar I (or II?), so it seems unlikely that it is simply an imitation. It is arguably the last coinage of a declining Dorestad, which even though four pieces have occurred as single finds in the vicinity, did not have the importance of the previous Carolingian coinage.²⁸

The role this economic centre had played in the first half of the ninth century in the tenth was subsequently taken over by Cologne as can be seen from the numerous finds of early 10th century Cologne coins in the Netherlands and also from the fact that Cologne provided the prototype for tenth century imitative striking in the Netherlands.

²² J.H. Holwerda, *Dorestad en onze vroegste middeleeuwen*, (Leiden, [1931]), p. 21 and *ibid*, 'Die Katastrophe an unserer Meeresküste im 9. Jahrhundert', *Oudheidkundige Mededeelingen uit ,s-Rijksmuseum van Oudheiden te Leiden*. N.R.10,1 (1929), pp. 9–20, especially 19–20, supposed that a natural catastrophe around 860 mentioned in the *Annales Xantenses* put an end to the flourishing trading centre. -

²³ In 948 the settlement is called *uilla quondam Dorseti nunc autem Uuik nominata*. *MGH Diplomata Ottonis I*, no. 98; P. Johanek in: *Hoops Reallexikon* (p. 64. Holwerda *Dorestad*, p. 25 suggests a continuation of settlement from the southern end of Dorestad into the medieval Wijk-bij-Duurstede. Archaeological remains from Roman as well as Carolingian times have been found at several places within Wijk. H. Hinz in *Lexikon des Mittelalters* vol. III, (Munich – Zurich 1986), p. 1266. W.A. van Es and W.J.H. Verwers, 'Dorestad' in *Hoops Reallexikon*, vol.6, pp. 65–76.

²⁴ P. Johanek, in *Hoops Reallexikon*, vol.6, p. 64. *MGH Diplomata Zwentiboldi et Ludowici Infantis*, no. 9.

²⁵ Coupland 'Trading places', p. 226 'Dorestad had ceased to exist'.

²⁶ W.J.H. Verwers, 'Wijk-bij-Duurstede-Dorestad', in: W.A. van Es and W.A.M. Hessing (eds), *Romeinen, Friezen en Franken in het hart van Nederland. Van Traiectum tot Dorestad 50 v.C. – 900 n.C.* (Utrecht – Amersfoort, 1994), pp. 235, 238.

²⁷ J. van Doesburg, 'De begraven hofstad op de Geer bij Wijk bij Duurstede', in: van Es and Hessing *Romeinen*, p. 195. Verwers points out that large parts of Dorestad had been washed away by erosion through alterations in the course of the river Rhine. Verwers, p. 235.

²⁸ Coupland, 'Trading places', p. 224 emphasizes that the economic hey-day of the city must have been between 820 and 840.