

J.C. Lindberg and P.O. Brøndsted: the first Danish publication of a Kufic coin hoard – the genesis of an extraordinary book

by Nadia Haupt



Fig. 1: Portrait of Jacob Christian Lindberg. The lithograph was made in 1867, after a photograph probably taken during his last year. I.W. Tegner & W. Kittendorf.

In the middle of the so-called Golden Age in Denmark, the brilliant young philologist and theologian Jacob Christian Lindberg¹ (fig. 1) published a numismatic study in French entitled *Lettre à M. le Chevalier P.O.*

Brøndsted, Conseiller d'État, Conseiller intime de Légation, agent de la Cour de Danemarck auprès du Saint Siège, Membre de l'Académie de Berlin, de Turin, de Florence, de Corfou, et de la Société de Littérature Scandinave etc. Sur quelques médailles cufiques dans le Cabinet du Roi de Danemarck, récemment trouvées dans l'île de Falster et sur quelques manuscrits cufiques. (fig. 2).² This was the first major publication of a Danish Viking Age silver hoard which paid special attention to the Kufic coins, and it included beautiful illustrations of such coins and their Arabic inscriptions in black, red, green and gold. It is true that the eccentric antiquarian Martin Friedrich Arendt had already published a short paper in 1808 on Per Tham's private collection of Kufic coins, but the Sønder Kirkeby publication must be counted as the first Danish book on Kufic coins.³

The 93 coins published by Lindberg – presumably a hoard – were primarily Kufic. They had been found at Sønder Kirkeby on the island of Falster, where they had been buried after AD 846/47 (the *terminus post quem* for the youngest coin). The find also comprised fragments of silver including two bracelets dated to the Viking Age. A national monetary system hardly existed in Denmark when the coins were buried, in the oldest period of the Viking Age in Denmark (c. AD 750-950). Financial transactions were based on the weighing of silver, which may explain the popularity of the Kufic dirhems, which were often produced from silver from rich Central Asian mines – the Central

1. DBL 3, IX, 53ff.; Kromann & J.S. Jensen 1983. I wish to thank Krista and Viggo Petersen's Foundation for financial support.
2. Lindberg 1830.

3. Høgsbro 1998, 130. Arendt's article was published in *Magazin Encyclopédique*, 1808, tome VI, 311-313: Notice sur une suite de médailles coufiques.



A

M. LE CHEVALIER P. O. BRÖNDSTED

CONSEILLER D'ÉTAT, CONSEILLER INTIME DE LÉGATION, AGENT DE LA COUR DE DANEMARCK
AUPRÈS DU SAINT SIÈGE. MEMBRE DE L'ACADÉMIE DE BERLIN, DE TURIN, DE FLORENCE, DE
CORFOU, ET DE LA SOCIÉTÉ DE LITTÉRATURE SCANDINAVE, etc.

SUR

**QUELQUES MÉDAILLES CUFIQUES DANS LE CABINET
DU ROI DE DANEMARCK, RÉCEMMENT TROUVÉES
DANS L'ÎLE DE FALSTER,**

ET SUR

QUELQUES MANUSCRITS CUFIQUES

PAR

JAC. CHR. LINDBERG.

AVEC XII PLANCHES.

COPENHAGUE.

AUX FRAIS DE SCHUBOTHE, LIBRAIRE.

1830.

De L'imprimerie de Fabricius de Copenhague.



Fig. 2: The first page of the publication of the Sønner Kirkeby hoard, with the dedication to the Chevalier P.O. Brøndsted. Photographer: Arnold Mikkelsen, the National Museum of Denmark.

Asian coins having mostly been brought to Northern Europe via the Caspian Sea and the Russian rivers.

The Sønder Kirkeby hoard entered the Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals in accordance with the time-honoured law concerning *Danefæ* (i.e. treasure trove), which had been most recently revised in 1752, when a *placat* was issued in the name of King Frederik V, describing what was included in the definition of *Danefæ*. Coins were mentioned specifically – together with *other objects of rarity* – as the property of the Crown, when found in the ground and without any owner. Antiquarian interest had obviously superseded the purely fiscal point of view as far as treasure trove was concerned, a most important development for the study of numismatics.⁴

By attempting to track down the coins comprised in this find, I have tried to reconstruct the relationship between the people who were somehow involved with them from the beginning. They were found in 1827 by a farmer, who handed all of them over to the vicar of Sønder Kirkeby, P. J. Sundorph⁵, who sent them on to the Chancellery of the Exchequer. Sundorph must have written a letter to the Chancellery as well, because the first written evidence known to me (a letter from the Chancellery to the Director General of the Royal Museums, Adam Wilhelm Hauch)⁶, contains much information, including a description of how the farmer had found the coins when digging in a bog, which could not otherwise have been known.⁷

Hauch was obliged to enquire whether the Royal Museums might be interested in the silver objects from the bog of Sønder Kirkeby. This he did in two letters.

He sent the first to Professor Christian Ramus,⁸ the head of the Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals at Rosenborg Castle, explaining that the hoard contained 17 whole silver coins and 76 fragments. Hauch dispatched the second letter to the secretary of the Royal Commission of Antiquities, Christian Jürgensen Thomsen⁹, asking him whether the Commission would be interested in some of the silver objects, two bracelets and other pieces, even if they were – unfortunately – fragmentary.¹⁰ When Ramus did not reply, Hauch had to send a second letter,¹¹ to which Ramus immediately replied, requesting 17 whole coins and 7 fragmented ones for The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals.¹² In addition, Hauch asked the Chancellery of the Exchequer how many objects the two institutions wanted to keep for their collections. In the same letter, he enquired if it was possible to hand the rest of the objects back to the vicar, Sundorph.¹³ The coins subsequently published by Lindberg were those obtained by the Cabinet.

The Chancellery of the Exchequer were obliged to test the silver, in order to pay the finder for his *Danefæ*, and they asked the mint master at the Royal Mint in Copenhagen to do this. The latter, Conrad Frederik Gerlach,¹⁴ made the necessary technical examination of 17 whole and 7 fragmented coins as well as of 4 pieces of silver, the total value of which was calculated to be 8 rigsbankdaler and 31½ skilling in silver.¹⁵

This kind of bureaucratic administrative routine was quite common at the time. The same kind of correspondence were exchanged between Hauch, the Chancellery of the Exchequer and the museums in the case

4. Mørkholm 1980, 32; Jørgensen & Petersen 1998, 12.

5. Wiberg 1960, 245.

6. DBL 3, VI, 82ff.

7. RA (The Danish National Archives/Rigsarkivet, Copenhagen), 216 (Archive no. 216: The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals), Letters received, from the Chancellery of the Exchequer to Hauch the 4th of August 1827.

8. DBL 3, VI, 597f.

9. DBL 3, XIV, 481ff.

10. The National Museum of Denmark, Danish prehistory, Topographical archive, 070212, letter from Hauch to Thomsen the 6th of August 1827.

11. RA, 216, Copy book, from Hauch to Ramus the 1st of October 1827.

12. RA, 216, Letters received, from Ramus to Hauch the 2nd of October 1827.

13. RA, 216, Copy book, from Hauch to the Chancellery of Exchequer the 8th of October 1827.

14. Rønne 1986, 102f.

15. RA, 442 (archive no. 442: The Royal Mint), The Mint in Copenhagen, Copy book, to the Chancellery of Exchequer the 27th of October 1827; RA, 442, The Mint in Copenhagen, Letters received, from the Chancellery of Exchequer the 20th of October 1827.



Fig. 3: Picture of all the remaining coins and the two bracelets from the hoard. The coins are still to be found in The Royal Collection of Coins & Medals, the National Museum of Denmark. The two bracelets in silver are at present held by the department of Danish prehistory, the National Museum of Denmark. Photographer: Arnold Mikkelsen, the National Museum of Denmark.

of other hoards such as that of St Jørgensbjerg (near Roskilde), found in 1802, and the two great Viking hoards from Selsø and Tørring.¹⁶ My study of the whole correspondence suggests, that the coins, which

did not enter The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals, were probably returned to the vicar Sundorph, who was supposed to return them to the finder.¹⁷ Two years later, in 1829, the vicar wrote to Thomsen, thanking

16. Posselt 1989, 122, 195; Märcher 2007.

17. R. Skovmand and C. von Heijne write that the hoard had 97 coins, but according to the contemporary sources in the archives it contained 93 coins including 4 Sassanian ones. Apparently

Skovmand had added the 4 Sassanian to the 93 and ended up with a total of 97. Galster 1924, 9; Skovmand 1942, 35; von Heijne 2004, 337, no. 6.6.

him for sending some pages of the planned book about the hoard, and saying that he was pleased with the work of Lindberg. Sundorph's letter is in the Archive of the Royal Commission of Antiquities, of which Thomsen was the secretary, but nothing indicates that the Commission as such was involved in the publication.¹⁸

Today it is possible to identify the coins from the Sønder Kirkeby hoard in the trays of The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals (since 1867 called The Royal Collection of Coins and Medals) (fig. 3), and Johannes Østrup referred to them in his catalogue of Arabic and Turkish coins of the Collection.¹⁹ It is, however, important to stress that the hoard as such never entered the Register of Finds at The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals, and the non-numismatic silver was only registered by Thomsen in the Register of the Royal Antiquities Commission many years later – in 1844.²⁰

Lindberg's publication of the Sønder Kirkeby hoard had remarkable and for its time unique illustrations. It contained drawings not only of the 18 Kufic and 4 Sassanian coins from the hoard, but also of the Arabic inscriptions, surrounded by circles and annulets. The author himself cut the clichés and produced all the illustrations. Lindberg emphasizes the importance of careful illustrations in his preface – even if Kufic coins for religious reasons do not have any other decoration than inscriptions. Only thus may misinterpretation of the inscriptions be avoided (fig. 4).

This was not the first numismatic publication by the young theologian. Lindberg had already published an essay on Punic coins in 1824. In this, his first book, he convincingly attributed the coins issued by the

Carthaginians in Seksi to the town Almuñécar, on the Spanish coast between Malaga and Almería.²¹ His results were soon accepted internationally, and are, as far as I know, still valid.

Lindberg drew inspiration from the learned bishop Frederik Münter (fig. 5a-b), who was well versed in theology, philology, archaeology, numismatics and several other fields as well.²² Münter maintained an extensive correspondence with many scholars in Europe, and assisted by Lindberg he developed a private collection of coins, including Kufic coins.²³

Münter's network also included Brøndsted, but this does not explain why Lindberg dedicated the Sønder Kirkeby publication to Brøndsted, who was not living in Copenhagen at the time. Even if the latter was a man of many talents, Kufic coins seem to be too far away from his normal interests. It has been suggested to me that perhaps Brøndsted had helped the publication financially, but this is difficult to believe, since Brøndsted often had his own financial troubles.

But a clue may be found in the preface to Lindberg's *Lettre*, where the motive behind the dedication is clearly stated: "... en vous remerciant publiquement de l'assistance, dont vous avez bien voulu seconder mes études ..." and more pointedly, "... mes sentiments de reconnaissance pour la bonté, dont vous avez daigné m'assister dans mon entreprise littéraire, en vous donnant de la peine, pour me rendre un service qu'un autre m'a refusé quoiqu'il l'eût pu faire sans le moindre embarras pour lui".²⁴ The full explanation of this affair is to be found in The Royal Library in Copenhagen, where four letters exchanged between Brøndsted and Lindberg are preserved in the two scholars' rich private

18. The National Museum of Denmark, Danish prehistory, Topographical archive, 070212, letter from Sundorph to Thomsen the 19th of February 1829.

19. Østrup 1938.

20. The National Museum of Denmark, Danish Middle Ages & Renaissance, Register of the Royal Commission of Antiquities, Register, no. 8433: "Two silver rings, bracelets ... found by peat cutting in a bog at Sønder Kirkeby on Falster ... several Kufic and Sassanian silver coins, which are kept in the Coin Cabinet." ("To Sølvringe, Armbaand, ... F. ved Tørvegravning i en Mose ved Sønder Kirkeby paa Falster ... Flere cufiske og sassanidiske Sölvmynter, der opbevares i Myntcabinettet".)

21. Lindberg 1824; Mørkholm 1981, 138, 146; Lund 2000, 121-22.

22. DBL 3, X, 197ff.; Kromann & Jensen 1983, 177.

23. Mørkholm 1981, 138. When Münter died, he left a collection of more than 10,000 coins, mainly Roman but containing as well more than 3,300 Greek coins and 400 Kufic coins. All the Kufic coins were donated to The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals after Münter's death, and Lindberg registered them. Haupt & J. S. Jensen 2007.

24. Lindberg 1830, 3, 6.

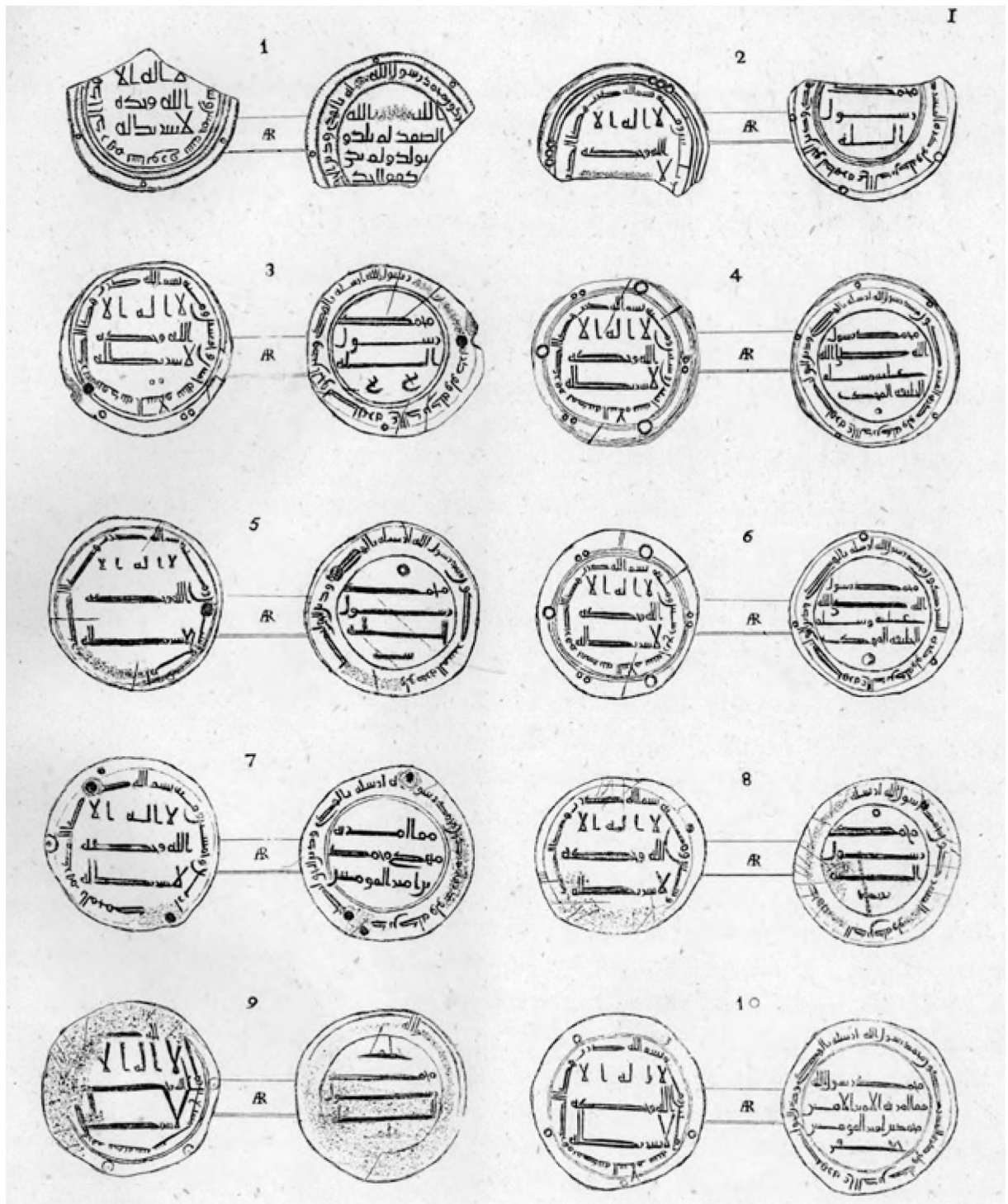


Fig. 4: Some of the beautiful illustrations in the publication. The book included two plates illustrating the coins, plus ten plates of various Arabic inscriptions from coins and manuscripts. Photographer: Arnold Mikkelsen, the National Museum of Denmark.

archives. We learn from this source that Lindberg had contacted Brøndsted in Paris in the autumn of 1828, because he needed his help in making a copy of a Punic-Greek inscription engraved on the front of a marble altar from Malta, which was in the possession of the Bibliothèque Mazarin in Paris. Lindberg needed the inscription for his work toward the degree of Master of Arts, which he was preparing for the senior lecturer in theology, Matthias Hagen Hohlenberg²⁵, at the University of Copenhagen.²⁶

Brøndsted received Lindberg's letter some ten days afterwards, on Saturday the 20th of September 1828, and he answered the next day, describing in technical terms how to make a copy of the inscription from the marble altar. In September 1828, all official institutions in Paris were closed for holidays, but Brøndsted wanted to help young Lindberg to finish his thesis, and in his letter he notes that he had to bribe the guard to be allowed to enter the Bibliothèque Mazarin. He is always very direct in his letters, i.e. he made sure to tell Lindberg that the letter to Denmark actually cost him 3 francs, which was more than the 2½ francs needed to bribe the guard. Brøndsted ended his letter asking Lindberg to send his greetings to his nephew, Andreas Christian Brøndsted²⁷, and to wish him good luck with his exams, because he was slightly worried about the young man's studies. He also sent greetings to Hohlenberg.²⁸

In November 1828 Lindberg handed in his paper for the master's degree at the University of Copenhagen: *De Inscriptione Melitensi Phoenicio-Græca*.²⁹ He explained in his introduction to the thesis how Brøndsted had helped him by copying the Punic-Greek inscrip-

tion, and referred to the letter, which included the technical details for making the inscription available.³⁰ But in the following year, 1829, shortly after having handed in his thesis, Lindberg opened an academic discussion with Hohlenberg, who had written a critical review of it.³¹ In those days it was not unusual to publish counter-arguments against one's critics. Lindberg wrote – and had printed – a pamphlet of 38 pages, a so-called *open letter*,³² in which he accuses Hohlenberg of having prevented him from using – or even looking at – Hohlenberg's original drawing of the Punic-Greek inscription from Malta. Lindberg emphasized that it was only thanks to Brøndsted that he had been able to finish his thesis. Lindberg also alleged that Hohlenberg did not understand the scientific use of Punic-Greek coins, with respect to their Punic-Greco script, whereas Brøndsted, a true scholar, could see the coins' importance.³³ This review provoked Hohlenberg to open a full-scale attack, but the incident ended in a disaster, as the students of the Faculty of Theology at the University stopped taking his teaching seriously.³⁴

Two years after Brøndsted had helped Lindberg, the latter again wrote to Brøndsted, mentioning the debt he felt towards him.³⁵ Lindberg said that he could not thank Brøndsted enough for his support when he was preparing his thesis, and that the only way to demonstrate his gratitude was by honouring Brøndsted in his publication of the hoard from Sønder Kirkeby. Brøndsted answered Lindberg's letter only some months later, in July 1830, with the excuse that he had been extremely occupied with work for the previous 6 or 7 months and consequently did not have the time to answer.³⁶ Brøndsted mentions in his letter that he would

25. DBL 3, VI, 419.

26. KB (The Royal Library/Det Kongelige Bibliotek, Copenhagen), NKS (New Royal Collection/Ny kongelige Samling), 1545 (1545 2^o: Letters to P.O. Brøndsted from Danes), no. 154: Letter from Lindberg to Brøndsted the 9th of September 1828.

27. DBL 3, III, 28.

28. KB, 922 (Additamenta 922 4^o), no. 139: Letter from Brøndsted to Lindberg the 21st of September 1828.

29. Lindberg 1828.

30. Lindberg 1828, 1.

31. Lindberg 1829.

32. Et såkaldt *Sendebrev*.

33. Brøndsted had for a time his own collection of coins, cf. Mørkholm 1982.

34. DBL 3, VI, 419.

35. KB, NKS, 1545, no. 155: Letter from Lindberg to Brøndsted the 1st of April 1830.

36. KB, 922, no. 140: Letter from Brøndsted in Paris to Lindberg the 22nd of July 1830.



Fig. 5a-b: Bishop Frederik/Friderich Christian Carl Hinrich Münter and his wife, Marie Elisabeth Münter, born Krohn. Both portraits are made by Jacob Kiærskou, around 1790. The decorations with the monogram of Frederik VI are added later. Privately owned.

send Lindberg his new book, the second volume of the *Voyages*, “because I write to a man of science”.³⁷

However, Brøndsted was somewhat surprised by the dedication, especially as he did not have any professional skills with Kufic coins. He pointed out that it would have been more correct if the publication had been dedicated to other *great men*, e.g. the French orientalist Baron Silvestre de Sacy.³⁸ To sum up, Brøndsted noted that it was quite natural to do small favours for colleagues, such as the one he had done, indicating in this way that the public dedication was a little too much.

37. “Da jeg skriver til en Videnskabsmand”.

38. MKL, XIV, 162ff.

39. KB, 1545, letter from de Sacy to Brøndsted the 19th of July 1830.

The back of the letter was used by Brøndsted, writing to Lindberg, 22nd of July 1830, cf. note 31. I have not been able to ve-

We know that Brøndsted was acquainted with de Sacy, because the last page of his letter to Lindberg was actually written on the back of a letter from Sacy. In it he thanks Brøndsted for having sent both the second volume of his *Voyages* and the publication of the Sønder Kirkeby hoard. But at the time de Sacy was writing this letter, the Frenchman was much occupied with a lot of work and did not have time to read Lindberg’s publication. But he promised that the next time he was going to his country house, he would find time to read – and to write a review of – Lindberg’s book.³⁹

Once again Brøndsted was very direct in his letter to

rify if de Sacy actually wrote a review of Lindberg’s book, and if, in such a case, the review was published. It should not, however, be forgotten that the events of the July revolution in Paris might have influenced de Sacy’s thoughts, in which case the writing of a review might have been postponed.



Fig. 6a-b: P.O. Brøndsted. Cut silhouettes, assigned to N. C. Fausing, probably the late 1830's. The Royal Danish decoration, which is seen at one of the cuts, was a typical feature, which in all probability delighted the 'chevalier' Brøndsted. (Mikala Brøndsted, cat. no. 13).

Lindberg, saying that he thought it would have been better if Lindberg had published the book about the Sønder Kirkeby hoard in Latin rather than in French. He was also a bit surprised to read Lindberg's description of Prof. Hohlenberg in the *open letter*: "Hohlenberg is not by any means, has never been and can never become such a person as you describe him".⁴⁰ However, Brøndsted was not going to be involved in this dispute; he advised Lindberg to be profound and reasonable in his scholarship.

Since Lindberg was familiar with numismatics, Brøndsted ended the letter by encouraging him to have a look at the Greek coins in Brøndsted's second volume of *Voyages*, and he wanted Lindberg to give his opinion about the coins. Brøndsted ended his letter with remarks about his personal relations in Copenhagen. As an example he again mentioned his nephew, Christian Brøndsted, but this time showing himself as the disappointed uncle. Brøndsted simply asked Lindberg *not* to send any greeting to his nephew, who had not finished his studies. Furthermore Brøndsted wondered if it were possible for Lindberg to send greetings to others of Brøndsted's friends back home: "If you meet Mr. Vicar Grundtvig,⁴¹ Thomsen, Professor Lund,⁴² Eckersberg⁴³ and Thiele⁴⁴ at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and other good acquaintances of mine, I would kindly ask you to greet these gentlemen from me."⁴⁵

This is the last known letter in the matter between the two men. Two years later, in 1832, Brøndsted be-

came Keeper of The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals. He remained in this position until his death in 1842, and he modernized the institution, which had been established in 1781. Among many other initiatives such as several new administrative devices, he promoted research in Kufic coins.⁴⁶

The assistance of Brøndsted in procuring a facsimile of the Malta stone – and Lindberg's ensuing dedication of the publication of the Sønder Kirkeby hoard – were to become a prelude to the cooperation between the two men during Brøndsted's period as Keeper of the Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals.⁴⁷ Besides cataloguing the Kufic coins and the collection of oriental coins in the Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals, Brøndsted assigned Lindberg to register and publish all new in-coming Viking hoards comprising Kufic coins.⁴⁸

The friendship of Brøndsted and Prince Christian Frederik, later King Christian VIII, also influenced Lindberg's other numismatic publications. Brøndsted and Prince Christian Frederik were both in contact with Christian Tuxen Falbe⁴⁹, who served as Danish consul-general in Tunis, but was known to them primarily for his professional skills in archaeology and numismatics. It has often been suggested in publications on the Golden Age in Denmark that Falbe and Lindberg only became acquainted after Brøndsted came to the Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals.⁵⁰ But they had actually known each other much earlier. That emerges from the letters of both Lindberg and Brønd-

40. "De, mon dieu! Hohlenberg er jo ingenlunde, har aldrig været og kan umuligen nogensinde blive en *Saadan* som De skildrer ham."

41. DBL 3, V, 318ff. When Lindberg was not at the Coin Cabinet he travelled around in Denmark to preach the word of Grundtvig.

42. DBL 3, IX, 167.

43. DBL 3, IV, 100ff.

44. DBL 3, XIV, 446ff. Just Mathias Thiele was Professor at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts from 1828, and was one of the friends included in the circle of the Rahbeks at Bakkehuset.

45. "Hvis De seer H^r. Pastor Grundtvig, Cancellieraad Thomsen, Professoren Lund, Eckersberg og Thiele ved Kunstakademiet og andre mine gode Bekjendte, da beder jeg mig venligen erindret hos disse Herrer."

46. The article by Jørgen Steen Jensen in this publication; Märcher forthcoming.

47. RA, 216, Letters received, from Brøndsted to Hauch the 31st of October 1835. Cf. the article by Jørgen Steen Jensen in this publication.

48. Lindberg 1842a.

49. DBL 3, IV, 322f.; Mørkholm 1981; Lund & Sørensen 1988, 9-11; Lund 2000. Falbe took up the initiative to publish the coinage of North Africa. He worked on the project together with Lindberg.

50. Mørkholm 1981, 146; Kromann & J.S. Jensen 1983, 183-186; J.S. Jensen 2000, 53.

sted, because it was apparently Falbe who brought the Sønder Kirkeby publication to Brøndsted in Paris.⁵¹ This is not surprising; during the first half of the 19th century, almost all Danes who were part of the cultural, political and intellectual environment knew each other.

Lindberg's publication of the Sønder Kirkeby hoard, with its dedication to Brøndsted, was a pioneering work – dealing with material, which Brøndsted was

not particularly familiar with. But after he returned to Denmark, as a man of international repute, and was appointed Keeper of The Royal Cabinet of Coins and Medals, more energy was focussed on the Kufic coins and their importance in the Viking Age. It is in no small part thanks to the practice initiated by Brøndsted and Lindberg, that more than 7,000 Kufic coins found in Denmark have been registered today.

51. Cf. KB, NKS, 1545, no. 155: Letter from Lindberg to Brøndsted the 1st of April 1830; Cf. KB, 922, no. 140: Letter from Brøndsted in Paris to Lindberg the 22nd of July 1830.