It is well known that there were close contacts between Zealand and the Roman Rhineland province of Germania Inferior from the end of the 2nd century and at least until the 4th century AD.

But what do we know of the Romans’ interest in The Northern Barbaricum? Very little! However, if we consider the relationship between the Roman Empire and The Barbaricum and Classical sources relevant to the North, and compare this with developments in Denmark during the first centuries AD, a picture emerges of contacts primarily of a military-political nature, whereby local chieftains entered into alliances with the Romans for reasons that are unknown to us. Conversely, other forms of contact appear to have been largely non-existent.

It is well known that the Roman Empire was, to some degree, of significance in the development of Iron Age societies in The Barbaricum during the first centuries AD. For example: a series of technological advances are associated with this period. The existence of some form of contact between Southern Scandinavia and the Roman Empire seems very probable in the light of the great number of Roman artefacts that have been recovered from graves, bogs and hoards. Our theories on the nature of this contact rest primarily on research into that which we normally, for want of a better term, refer to as Roman ‘imports,’ i.e. prestigious artefacts which can be linked to feasts or banquets. Two other groups of artefacts of Roman origin comprise militaria and coins. Most of these finds originate from hoards of one form or another and have, as a consequence, proved less easy to deal with relative to hypotheses concerning contacts with the southern superpower.

The symposium ‘The Iron Age on Zealand 2009’ was of course directly concerned with Zealand and not the whole of Southern Scandinavia. And when we add ‘contacts with the Roman Empire’, this leads most people to think of the Himlingøje dynasty as being one of the most significant factors. The investigations of the Himlingøje cemetery in Eastern Zealand were published in 1995 (Lund Hansen et al. 1995), and most scholars will be familiar with at least the main aspects of the theories concerning this site and the position in Scandinavia during the Late Roman Iron Age attributed to it. Therefore, no claim can be made here with the respect to the presentation of new information to any great extent. I will therefore keep the discussion of this cemetery to a minimum. It cannot be avoided completely, however, because when the subject of the discussion concerns contacts between Denmark and the Roman Empire, Eastern Zealand occupies a completely unique position. I will attempt to qualify this picture below. Firstly, it is necessary to start at the beginning, because it makes no sense to describe connections between the Roman Empire and Zealand without first outlining the context within which these contacts should be seen.

The first contact

When one studies contacts between the Romans and their Germanic neighbours during the first centuries AD, a series of interesting observations emerge, not least with respect to the developments, which can be observed regarding our area during the same period.

The first real contact with the northern areas of The Barbaricum arose in 12 BC when Emperor Augustus initiated a conquest of Germania. Through the action of his adopted sons, first Drusus and later Tiberius, large parts of the area between the Rhine and the Elbe were subjugated. By 4 or 3 BC, the Romans had advanced so far in their efforts that they were in a position to found the only known and presumably first Roman town in Germania at present-day Waldgirmes in Hessen (Eck 2009, 194).

As is well-known, this adventure ended de facto when the Cheruscan chieftain Arminius in September AD 9 ambushed the Roman governor Quintilius Varus in what some mistakenly refer to as Rome’s greatest defeat. At Kalkriese in Lower Saxony several days of battle ended with most of the 18th, 19th and 20th legions having been wiped out. This resulted in the Romans immediately having to rethink their strategy with respect to the northern part of The Barbaricum. As Augustus himself recounts in his memoirs, the Romans formed guest friendships with a number of Germanic tribes, including the Cimбри and the Semnones, two of the more significant Germanic
tribes in Roman literature (Augustus, Res Gestae 26.2.4). This approach was not developed purely for this occasion but had been successfully employed by the Romans for some time. That the Romans had not officially abandoned Germania at this time is apparent from, among other things, the fact that the two military districts on the Rhine were only made into provinces under Domitian in the AD 80s.

It is precisely during the first half of the 1st century AD, in period B1a (AD 1-40), that we see the first larger quantities of Roman imports finding their way into graves in Denmark. We know from classical sources that the Romans, in connection with their campaigns in Germania, sailed up along the west coast of Jutland and explored the area. As it has already been pointed out by B. Storgaard in the catalogue for the exhibition The Spoils of Victory from 2003, it is remarkable that the majority of the rich graves during this period lie close to the coast (Storgaard 2003, 111) (fig. 1). When the character of the Roman imports in the ten graves containing Roman imports dated to B1a is examined, a pattern becomes apparent. In a class of its own is, of course, the Hoby grave with its Augustan silver kantharoi (Friis Johansen 1923). But also Byrsted in Himmerland stands out. It is interesting that seven out of the ten graves are furnished with a bronze basin with loose handles in palmette attachments of type Eggers 92. Moreover, this basin is the only imported artefact in four of the graves. This could indicate that we are dealing with an isolated event, where this type of artefact, in particular, has represented a transaction. Naturally, it would be fascinating if this event could be linked to the Romans’ expedition along the coast of Jutland, but the involvement of a Germanic middle man from Byrsted, for example, is also conceivable.

But guest friendships, i.e. links between powerful chieftains and the Romans, are not the only form of contact that we have indications of. In this respect, I am thinking in particular of the discovery of a pugio, a Roman military dagger, located in grave A4103 at the Hedegård cemetery (Madsen 1999, 74ff). This is not a particularly rich grave, but what is interesting is the dagger, a weapon that can be exclusively linked with the Roman army. This stands in stark contrast to Roman swords which were distributed widely across the whole of Germania and cannot necessarily be linked to the Roman military. Furthermore, the fact that this type of weapon (the pugio) has only been found in three instances outside the Roman Empire indicates that there was a close connection between the deceased and the Roman army. Maybe he was a local chieftain who had made his military capacity, in the form of his men, available as auxiliary troops, perhaps as local scouts who could communicate with the locals.

Stagnation

In the subsequent period, B1b (AD 40-70), a fall is seen in imports in Denmark, after which they increase dramatically in B2 (AD 70-150/60), only to decline again in C1a (AD 150/60-210/220). During the same period, a series of events took place of great relevance for the Romans’ actions towards their Germanic neighbours. In AD 39-40, the Emperor Caligula set about launching an invasion of Britannia. When he reached the English Channel, he ordered the army to draw up into battle formation and attack the sea. He then ordered the soldiers to gather sea shells on the beach as war booty, after which he returned to Rome (Sueton, Caligula 46). His successor, Claudius, who came to power in AD 41, badly needed a military success. So, in AD 43, rather than throwing himself at the, seen in historical perspective, somewhat problematic Germania, he began a conquest of Britannia. In AD 47, a direct order came from the Emperor to Gnaeus Corbulo, legate for the Lower Rhine army, to withdraw all troops to the Rhine (Tacitus, Annales 11.7, 19). This means then that the Romans’ interest in Germania declined precisely during this period when we can see a corre-

Fig. 1. Map of graves from period B1a (AD 1-40) containing Roman objects.
The Batavian revolt and renewed contacts

During the next many years, the Romans occupied themselves in Britannia, but following Nero’s suicide in AD 68 civil war broke out in the empire. In December AD 69, the victor of the conflict, Vespasian, alone remained, but he also faced revolt at both ends of the empire. On the northern border of the empire lived the Batavians, a Germanic tribe at one time allocated lands south of the Rhine by Caesar. This people, who were famed for the quality of their horsemen, rebelled together with some Gallic tribes who wanted a Gallic empire. Moreover, the Batavians, who merely wished to throw off the Roman yoke, had not only allied themselves with all the known Germanic tribes from The Barbaricum living along the Rhine, but also the otherwise rather unspecific ‘Universa Germania’, or ‘All of Germania’ (Tacitus, Historiae 4.28).

The situation in the NW provinces in AD 70 was such that the alliance had taken over or destroyed all the Roman auxiliary and legionary forts from the North Sea to the Alps. Unfortunately for the alliance, the difficult art of cooperation was not among their salient talents. Consequently, when Vespasian sent eight legions against the rebels, the revolt was steadily quelled, and what potentially must have seemed a serious threat was averted fairly simply (Tacitus, Historiae 4.12-37, 54-79). The episode did, however, demonstrate a series of shortcomings in Roman organisation in the north, not least that it can be dangerous to have auxiliary troops stationed on their own native soil. Consequently, after sending the Batavians to Northern Britannia, the Romans turned their attention towards another problem, namely Germania. At this point in time in history, one should not imagine that a great strategy had been worked out in Rome for the whole empire. Any problems which arose were to be dealt with by the local governor or, in this case, by the legates for the two Rhine armies. Accordingly, the matter was approached in two different ways (Grane 2008, 204f).

In the south, the revolt had also revealed that the supply lines between the Danube forts and the Rhine forts were too extended to be efficient. Therefore, an advance was made again into Germania and conquest begun of the Agri Decumates; a process which was first completed under Antoninus Pius in the middle of the 2nd century AD (Schönberger 1985, 359-400). In the north, another strategy was chosen. An offensive was presumably at this point in time unthinkable. The Augustan fiasco is unlikely to have been completely forgotten. Furthermore, considerable resources were being expended in Britannia where there were constant problems. But the Romans were surrounded by hostile tribes that had to be tamed in one way or another. This could have led to them upgrading diplomacy to a previously unseen extent.

Part of this campaign was directed in particular towards Southern Scandinavia. In this way, it was possible to acquire allies who were resident on the other side of the immediate enemies. This can be concluded from the fact that the quantity of imports in Central Germania remained unchanged during the second half of the Early Roman Iron Age (Kunow 1983, 36), whereas a massive increase is seen in the north. Also the nature of the imports provides an indication of such a strategy, because in B2 this is characterised by a few mass-produced artefact types (Lund Hansen 1987, 198). The theory is possibly further supported by the fact that Flavian denarii from the period following the Batavian revolt constitute a considerable proportion of the total number of Roman coins found in Denmark (Bursche 2002, 70f; Horsnæs 2003, 335). One coin hoard, which may be linked with a diplomatic offensive at that time, is that from Ginderup in Northern Jutland; this comprises 31 denarii and an aureus. Although only two of the denarii are from Vespasian, composition of the assemblage is such that it probably entered the ground while the Flavians ruled in Rome or shortly after. This conclusion, which was presented by L. Bjerg a couple of years ago, is based on similar assemblages of coins from Pompeii and the Roman fort of Kastel Rheingönheim (Bjerg 2007, 41ff, 85ff). On Zealand, there is the largest find of denarii from Råmosen. This comprised 428-440 coins extending from Tiberius (AD 14-37) to Commodus (AD 180-193). About a quarter of them were struck under Vespasian. Of these, there are numerous duplicates, including 22 coins presumably of the same type and year (Kromann 1995, 349ff). This find was, however, buried at a later point in time and it is necessary, therefore, to have reservations relative to other possible reasons for its composition. It should be noted, moreover, that regarding the Roman coins in Denmark, the predominant view is that they did not enter The Barbari-
The Classical sources

It is also from this time that our best source relative to the geography of the North originates. This is the Natural History of Pliny the Elder, who describes the whole extent of the northern coast from the Bay of Finland in the east to Cadiz in the west (Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* 4.94-7). Over time, there have been several interpretations of this text, but these focus to a great extent on the individual elements and ignore the narrative. One of the most important elements is the Codan Bay. This begins with the immense Saevo Mountain and continues up to the Cimbrian Promontory. The latter has always been identified as Jutland, whereas it was firmly decided at the beginning of the 20th century that the former corresponded to the southern tip of Norway. This was supported by the local place name Seve. Unfortunately, it turned out that the locality had been given this name precisely on the grounds of Pliny’s text. A Swedish linguist by the name of Svensson suggested in the 1920s that the name of the Saevo mountain come from the Gothic *Saiws*, which means lake, i.e. the immense lake mountain, and that this referred to the Masurian Lake District in Poland (Svensson 1921, 63).

As this area does not really fit with the adjective ‘immense’ meaning high, Svensson suggested that it should be read as a description of the area’s extent. The Masurian Lake District comprises a hilly moraine landscape with about 3000 lakes covering an area of 52,000 km². This explanation was, however, rejected or ignored. There is no space here to deal with all the fascinating questions that have arisen in connection with these interpretations. The latter have been dominated partly by linguistic scholars with a nationalistic axe to grind and partly by analyses of which of Pliny’s sources could and could not have contributed names of places located on the North Sea and the Baltic, respectively.

This has resulted in modern scholars presenting a rather fragmented picture of the North, not much of which would have been understood by the Classical authors, and which seems to be characterised by misunderstandings and repetition arising from the fact that several sources must have mentioned the same locality under different names. Another route would have been to take the whole of Pliny’s text as the point of departure and perhaps listen a little to Svensson (fig. 2).

This leads to the conclusion that the information actually makes very good sense. It is of course necessary to add the further information which can be deduced from Ptolemy, Marcianus and Solinus from the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries AD.²

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² For a translation of the full text mentioning all place names on the map, Pliny *NH* 4.94-97 see Grane 2007a, appendix 1.
The Marcomannic Wars and the Late Roman Iron Age

The Late Roman Iron Age is often described as having had a tendency towards restructuring and a centralisation, both within agriculture and the political power play. These restructurings are commonly linked to the Marcomannic Wars of AD 166-180, which were of great significance for both the Germanic peoples and the Romans. However, already during the course of the 1st century AD, we see signs of the formation of supra-regional powers. This applies to the construction of the rampart, the Olger Dike, in Southern Jutland (Christensen 2006, 9) and the first large depositions of war booty in Vimose (Pauli Jensen 2008, 383f). The centralisation process attributed to the subsequent period had already begun.

The prelude to the Marcomannic Wars was, according to the sources, that the tribes living close to the Limes, the Marcomanni and the Quadi and their neighbours, for example the Langobardi, the Obii and the Victuali, felt pressured by superiors barbari, the ‘upper’ or ‘more distant’ Barbarians. They therefore asked for shelter within the borders of the Roman Empire (Historia Augusta, Marcus Antoninus 14.1). In my view, we should look at the restructuring in The Northern Barbaricum as one of the contributing factors to the war, rather than the reverse, which is how the matter is otherwise often presented.

The Romans and Zealand

Following the Marcomannic Wars, the Romans faced a situation that was very similar to the one which had arisen after the Batavian revolt, apart from the fact that they had now also fought the tribes along the Danube. At the same time, there were the first visible signs that a power factor with strong links to the Roman Empire had positioned itself on Eastern Zealand. This connection appears to have followed the sea route to the Rhine and the province of Germania Inferior. It was probably supported by an ally in Brokær at the mouth of the river Kongeå in Western Jutland.

Himlingøje graves 1875-10 and 1980-25

As already mentioned, the Himlingøje dynasty will, as such, not be entered into in great detail here, but I would like to look a little more closely at the two founder graves, graves 1875-10 and 1980-25. They differ from the later, rich graves by being cremations. Moreover, they were each individually marked by a barrow which rendered them visible monumentally in the landscape. Even though neither of them could be identified to gender, they are both seen as being men’s graves due to the military equipment included in them.

Grave 1875-10 contained the remains of a person of between 30 and 50 years of age. Buried with him were probably two situlae with face attachments, an Eastland cauldron, one and a half sets of ladles/sieves, two silver beakers, three knob spurs, a fibula, a bone pin, a three-layered comb, a glass beaker and a handled pottery vessel. All of this was deposited within a trulla, a bronze saucepan (fig. 3), which functioned as an urn (Lund Hansen 1987, 412; Lund Hansen et al. 1995, 120ff, 146f, 250f, figs. 8-10).

Grave 1980-25 contained the remains of a person of between 18 and 25 years of age. He had been buried together with a number of bronze vessels not all of which could be identified. There were also three glass vessels, of which one is presumably a circus beaker. In addition, there was also military equipment consisting of a spearhead and belt fittings of iron and knob spurs, two types of shield fitting and a bandolier fitting of bronze. All of this had been deposited within a terra sigillata bowl (fig. 4), and over it lay 29 pieces of gold foil (Lund Hansen 1987, 413; Lund Hansen et al. 1995, 118f, 165f, 251, figs. 31-3).

The monumental expression and the great quantity of grave goods, including a large proportion of Roman imports, is surpassed in Scandinavia during this period only by the Brokær grave which, by way of two silver beakers, is linked to Himlingøje (Lund Hansen et al. 1995, 385f). Let us look more closely at the two best preserved artefacts, namely the urns. One of them is a trulla, a saucepan of Egggers type 142, with a diameter of 22 cm. The other is a terra sigillata bowl of Dragendorf type 37 from...
Lezoux. I will assume here that the urns were carefully chosen, and that they did not just take a random bowl which the deceased was thrown into. In the case of grave 1875-10, the saucepan was chosen and several of the other objects had to be bent and pressed together in order to fit within it. In terms of both size and aesthetics, one of the buckets with face attachments or even the Eastland cauldron would have been better suited. On the basis of this hypothesis, one can assume that the saucepan had a special significance for the deceased. Saucepans are found across the whole of The Barbaricum and, as such, are not anything special. However, within the Roman world, the saucepan was, of all bronze vessels, the one particularly associated with the Roman army as it was standard equipment among soldiers (Bishop & Coulston 2006, 119; Kunow 1983, 75). Considering that the grave represents the beginnings of an influential and wealthy family with contacts to the Roman Empire, the saucepan could symbolise a connection to army life and the Roman army, at the same time as highlighting the significance of the person’s military status in society. This should not, however, be understood such that the person had served as an auxiliarius, an ordinary soldier, with a Roman auxiliary unit and had, subsequently, with his many years of savings taken power in his home village. Such a scenario is sometimes presented (e.g. Wells 1999, 255f) but is, in my opinion, very improbable. As the auxiliary troops were the lowest paid, the real reward for an auxiliarius must have been Roman citizenship for him and his descendants with the opportunities this brought with it. In Himlingøje grave 1875-10 we are dealing with a man who had achieved leadership by virtue of his strategic and military abilities as a commander, something which is also mentioned by Tacitus as being important to the Germanic tribes.

This hypothesis is supported by another find; in a richly-furnished inhumation grave at Marwedel in Lower Saxony, the deceased was furnished with both military equipment and Roman imports (fig. 5). Whereas the majority of the grave goods were placed above the head, a saucepan of Eggers type 142-4 was positioned by the middle of the body (Leux 1992, 319, fig. 3B, 322). This grave is dated to the beginning of B2 and might therefore be of a person who could have profited from the Romans’ diplomatic initiatives.

A similar hypothesis can be constructed with respect to grave 1980-25. The use of a terra sigillata bowl as an urn could symbolise that the deceased had special links with the Roman Empire. This can be concluded on the relatively simple basis that terra sigillata was not considered as being particularly prestigious in The Northern Barbaricum. Terra sigillata is very widespread within about 200 km of the Limes. It is seen in large quantities especially in the Danube regions, for example in the Musov grave, but both in the northern part of the Netherlands and also up along the amber route to Poland it is...
found in abundance. The fact that this was not also the case in Scandinavia must be due to the fact that people were simply not interested. The only place in Southern Scandinavia where we have remains preserved of more than one type of terra sigillata is at Møllegårdsmarken near Gudme and Lundeborg. Seven different graves were found to contain two whole vessels and some sherds, as well as some fragments which had been converted into distaff whorls or pendants (Lund Hansen 1982, 85ff). The reason for this should, in my opinion, be sought in the site’s vicinity to the trading port which was frequented by sailors who naturally had greater contacts with the outside world. That is to say, the presence of terra sigillata, and the fact that the deceased was interred in a bowl of this material, indicates a personal significance and a symbolic value in the burial ritual. This could have arisen through a closer association with the Romans, and this possibility appears even more likely to have been the case when the social and power-political significance of these graves is taken into consideration.

The golden age

I will now hastily pass by the most interesting period in the Roman Iron Age, C1b (AD 210/20-250/60). Denmark stands out clearly relative to the rest of The Barbaricum by having the richest graves (fig. 6). In Eastern Zealand, Himlingøje was at its height. Gudme was taking shape on Funen. There, and in Jutland, we see the most extensive deposits of war booty in the form of Vimose 3 and Illerup A. Similarly in Jutland, Vorbasse made its mark.

The beginning of the end

In AD 224, the Persian Sassanids took power from the Parthian Arsacids in Persia. This had very serious consequences which, ultimately, also affected Denmark. The Parthians and the Persians were the only of the Romans’ neighbours who could measure up to them in status. But whereas the Parthians were good and peaceful neighbours, the Persians were aggressive and hostile. This meant that after AD 224 the Romans were forced to maintain a much greater military presence on the eastern front.

In the spring of AD 260, Emperor Valerian was taken prisoner by the Persians. His son and co-emperor Gallienus was at the time fighting on the Danube and the Rhine. By the end of the year, events had gone from bad to catastrophic. Gallienus’ two sons had been murdered, Zenobia of Palmyra had taken possession of the easternmost provinces, and his commander-in-chief of the Rhine armies, Postumus, had usurped the western provinces and formed what is known as the Gallic Empire. These events could have contributed to the decline of the dynasty on Eastern Zealand, which we see in C2 (AD 250/60-310/20) (Grane 2007b, 181f, 276; Storgaard 1998, 125). At the same time, we see the ascent of a centre of power in Central Germania, named after the rich elite graves from Haßleben and Leuna in Thüringen and Sachsen-Anhalt. This centre had a relatively short horizon as it belongs solely to C2. Furthermore, there were close links with the Gallic Empire and the capital in Cologne. This can be seen from the spread of Gallic coins and the distribution of a type of imported wares that are particularly associated with Cologne during this period (Werner 1973). Cologne was also a focal point for Eastern Zealand, but it is possible that Postumus did not wish to make use of the old network of alliances. Such as the alliance system appears to have functioned at that time, it would have been based on personal contacts and agreements which first became severed or broken on the death of one or other of the parties (Grave 2007b, 276). Instead, Postumus...
severed the connections to the north and built up his own network with its roots in Central Germania. If the arguments in favour of Postumus’ network are applied to Denmark, it becomes apparent that there is a remarkable absence of coins from the Gallic Empire. It is first from the time after Emperor Aurelian had united the empire in AD 274 that there again are coins in a Danish context. Several of these coins were minted under Probus, who was Emperor from AD 276 to 282. One of these, an aureus, comes from grave a in the Varpelev cemetery (Engelhardt 1877). I believe that this is one of several indications that contact with Zealand was resumed after Aurelian had re-conquered the Gallic Empire. The short, but very intense, horizon of the Haβleben-Leuna centre indicates similarly that Aurelian, for the same reasons as Postumus in his time, did not wish to preserve the network of the Gallic Empire. The Varpelev cemetery, presently dated to C2, is the final clear manifestation of the power of the Eastern Zealand dynasty. Conversely, the finds give the impression that we are dealing with the most direct and personal contact in the Roman Iron Age, completely on a par with the Hoby site (Grane forthcoming a).

Varpelev

Out of 28 graves, two – one of a man (grave a) and one of a woman (grave alpha) – were particularly richly furnished (Engelhardt 1877, 349-68). It is therefore obvious to think of a prince and his personal household. The rich graves are normally dated to C2 (Lund Hansen 1987, 416), but more detailed studies of the cemetery would possibly be able to demonstrate both that a few of the graves could be as early as C1b/C2 and that graves a and alpha should, instead, be placed at the beginning of C3. To name but two objects, this conclusion is based on the belt in grave a, which is very unlikely to be earlier than C3 (Sommer 1984, 19, 55f, 59ff, 74ff) and the swastika fibula in grave alpha which has recently been dated to C3 (Przybyla 2009, 52, fig. 18).

In addition to the obvious symbols of princely power, a snake’s head arm ring, two gold finger rings, a gold pin and the gold coin, the man was also buried with a Roman bronze basin and six glass vessels (fig. 7). Among the latter, presumably of Syrian origin, was a kantharos of blue glass in an openwork silver frame with a Greek inscription meaning
‘for your happiness’, together with a phial which could have held perfumed oil to be used in the burial. Within the Roman Empire, these types of glass vessels were associated with cults that celebrated a life after death, such as Christianity and the Bacchus cult (Cool 2002). Three glass vessels were faceted, whereas one could not be identified.

The prince’s military power was represented in the grave goods by a belt with a buckle and a strap-end fitting of silver of the type which is known subsequently as the Late Roman military belt with animal ornamentation. This is one of the earliest examples of this type, which is otherwise normally worked in bronze. The closest parallels appear to occur in the easternmost Danube regions on both sides of the Roman border (Roth 1994, 225; Gomolka-Fuchs 1999), even though some similarities can be traced in the west (Pirling 1989, 48f, 57f, plates 6, 7, 12). Furthermore, the prince also had what previously has been identified as a drinking horn, but, in the light of the discovery of a signalling horn in the princely grave at Ellekilde, this presumably also should be interpreted as such.

Grave a, in particular, stands out in that most of the grave goods are unique objects, including four of the five preserved glass vessels, together with the belt. This gives the impression of a prince who had been in close contact personally with the Romans and who had experienced and subsequently adopted Roman religious rituals.

The woman, too, had been buried with well-known status symbols, such as a swastika fibula, a snake’s head finger ring, a faceted glass vessel and a Roman gold finger ring set with a cornelian produced in Pannonia (fig. 8). Most likely the latter was originally intended for a man. In addition to being a sign of Roman citizenship, Roman gold rings were used as symbols of friendship and alliances, for example between the Roman emperor, possibly by way of a governor or a legate, and Germanic princes (Andersson 1985, 135ff; Hurschmann 2001, 1021). From the Byzantine emperor Konstantinos Porphyrogenitos († AD 959), we also know that Constantine the Great certainly gave gold rings to his allies (Konstantinos Porphyrogenitos 53.191).

Fig. 8. Varpelev, grave alfa. Photo The National Museum of Denmark/John Lee.
The nature of the relations

Whereas the power of the Himlingøje dynasty was founded on close links to the western regions of the Roman Empire and the capital of the province of *Germania Inferior, Colonia Claudia Ara Agrippinensium*, or in common terms Cologne, contacts at the beginning of the 4th century appear to have been drawn further towards the east. Intra-Germanic connections between Eastern Zealand and SE Europe existed, however, already in the 3rd century AD (Lund Hansen 1987, 178f, 224; Lund Hansen et al. 1995, 392, 413f; Storgaard 2003, 116f). In the case of the Varpelev prince, the faceted glass vessels also point in this direction, even though it is difficult to say whether they all were Roman or whether there may be one of Gothic origin. Several of them are, however, of an incredibly high quality which leads U. Lund Hansen to a cautious placing of their origin in Roman workshops near Constantinople.6

This movement towards the east can also be followed within the Roman Empire. The NW regions were affected by changes in sea level in the North Sea which rendered parts of *Germania Inferior* uninhabitable (Bloemers 1990, 116). At least from the end of the 3rd century AD we know that Germanic tribes were settled within the border and were tasked with defending it (Modéran 2008). And after having had a strong presence in the west in the first part of the 4th century AD, Constantine the Great also moved eastwards and founded his seat of residence at Constantinople in AD 330.

Accordingly, the conditions for alliances which had functioned during the course of the 3rd century AD changed completely. With respect to the contact with Zealand at that point in time, the Romans’ requirement was, in my opinion, an alliance partner who was able, to some degree, to secure the Germanic hinterland. But these circumstances changed with the break brought about by Posthumus’ Gallic Empire. And even though it may seem that attempts were made in the first instance to recreate former conditions, the situation appeared very different at the transition to the 4th century AD. It is possible that the tetrarchy, which was introduced by Diocletian (AD 204-305), and the military and administrative reforms which he initiated, put old alliance formulas out of action. This could again have required more active efforts from the Germanic princes in so far as they wished to maintain their status. If the consequences of such a hypothesis are to be drawn in full, it is conceivable that the Varpelev prince, together with his household army and perhaps local allies, journeyed south and, for a period, rode with the army of Constantine the Great and took part in his battles on the Danube against the Goths. Contact with this region is at least indicated by the finger ring, several of the glasses and the belt with silver fittings.

Local connections

In Southern Scandinavia, the Varpelev prince appears to have preserved a regional network, at least across the area represented by present-day Denmark. An indication of this is seen, for example, in the gold pins with double volutes from Varpelev grave a, and Vrangstrup grave 1 from the eastern part of Central Jutland (fig. 9) (Lund Hansen 1987, 428). In Vrangstrup grave 5, there was a Roman ring not unlike that from Varpelev grave alpha, though with a blue stone. This grave also contained a faceted glass. The most obvious example is, however, the Årslev grave on Funen, with which there are several links. Not least of these are there strong bonds to SE Europe (Storgaard 2003, 121ff), but the trilobate hair pins from Varpelev grave alpha and from Årslev, in particular, support this conclusion (fig. 10). When we speak of Southern Scandinavian connections with the Romans and SE Europe, we are unable to ignore the first rich hoards of precious metals from Boltinggård Skov and Brangstrup (Henriksen 1992; Henriksen & Horsnæs 2006). Both finds have their earliest coin from the reign of Trajan Decius (AD 249-251) and their latest from Constantine the Great, minted in AD 335/6. The geographic distribution for the origins of the coins

Fig. 9. Gold pins with double-spiraled heads. Varpelev, grave ‘a’ and Vrangstrup, grave 1.
points in the case of Boltinggård Skov towards the West and for Brangstrup towards the East, whereas the pendants included in the Brangstrup hoard have parallels in the Černjachov culture (Werner 1988). On the basis of the wear, or lack of it, on the latest of the coins in the two finds, the Boltinggård Skov hoard is reckoned to have been deposited very soon after this date, whereas the Brangstrup examples may have been in circulation for a longer time before the coins entered the earth (Henriksen & Horsnæs 2006, 266).

In the light of the hypothesis presented above, these finds could easily be seen as part of the payment which the Southern Scandinavian princes received in return for participating in battles for the Romans. Some of this payment could have included gold worked by the Goths which ended up in the imperial treasure chest following battles on the Danube. The half kolben arm ring from Boltinggård Skov, with the characters ‘P-III’ punched into it, could similarly have passed through a Roman treasure chest where it was equipped with what must have been a statement of weight or value before it returned to Germania as payment (Grane forthcoming b; Henriksen & Horsnæs 2006, 262ff). It has long been known that the Romans not only used coins as payment but that, within the borders of the empire, cut-up silver objects (i.e. hack silver) in measured pieces was also used, probably as a consequence of the shortage of coins (Grünhagen 1954, 65ff; Guggisberg forthcoming). For example, the Bjørnebanke dish from Gudme was not necessarily cut up into pieces because some Germanic warriors were sharing out their loot, but it could have been received as such in payment.

On Zealand, the possibility cannot be ruled out that the Nyrup grave also has a role relative to Eastern Zealand. The contents of this rich but rather unfairly treated grave, which was H.J. Eggers’ only ‘Leitfund’ for C3 (Eggers 1955, 221ff), include a silver hair pin, two gold spiral finger rings and a swastika fibula (Lund Hansen 1987, 410). Furthermore, there are all of three coins, two siliquae from the final year of the reign of Constantine the Great, AD 336/7 and a solidus from his successor Constans (AD 337-350). This is, however, something which future studies must demonstrate.

Just less than two centuries after the dynasty was founded, the man from Varpelev, as its last prince, was interred together with status symbols and banquet tableware according to the ancient rituals. During the course of the 4th century, rich princely graves were replaced by hoards of precious metals as status markers for the elite. The reason for this change is not something which can be dealt with here, but one explanatory model for the Eastern Zealand dynasty is that the elite no longer needed to maintain their position in society by way of spectacular burials (Hedeager 1990, 85f, 204; Storgaard 2003, 119). Even though imports of Roman luxury wares ebbed out, this does not mean that the power of the dynasty necessarily did the same. That it was not the case is indicated by the large number of hoards of precious metals found in Eastern Zealand and dating from the time after the rich elite graves (Fonnesbech-Sandberg 1989, 431, fig. 5; Storgaard 2001, 105). An example of this is the hoard from Høsten Torp which lies only about 11 km to the west of Himlingøge (Voss 1954). Here, a couple of centuries after the Varpelev prince, just less than 4.5 kg of hack silver was buried; it comprised ingots, local and Roman craftsmanship and Roman coins from the second half of the 4th century.

Notes
1 Personal communication M. Driessen, University of Amsterdam.
2 For a discussion of this question see Grane 2007a.
3 For further discussion of this, with references, see Pauli Jensen 2008, 305ff and note 961.
4 For a discussion of the time around the Marcomannic Wars see Grane 2007b, 45ff.
5 For a discussion of the crisis during the 3rd century AD and diplomatic relations between Romans and the Germanic tribes during the 3rd century see Grane 2007b, 81ff.
6 Personal communication from U. Lund Hansen, University of Copenhagen.
7 Another question that is probably worthy of investigation, concerns the regional contacts, during the period from the 3rd to the 5th century AD, between the Southern Scandinavian princes and their Central and Eastern Germanic peers; for example in Hafleben-Leuna and Gommern in Germany, and in Zakrzów and Jakuszowice in Southern Poland. However, this is a subject which lies beyond the scope of the present article.
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