

# The woman in the mound

## *A new interpretation of grave T 16136 at Værnes*

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Several grave mounds were excavated at Værnes in 1940. One of these, grave **T 16136**, turned out to be a boat grave containing a woman. The mound was circular with a diameter of 10 m. Due to the grave being excavated by non-archaeologists, there are very little details in the excavation report (Petersen [1942](#)) regarding the position of the artefacts.

The museum of Natural History and Archeology, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet) very kindly allowed me to examine the textiles from the grave in 2018.

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## The archaeological remains in grave T 16136

The grave contained two oval brooches of type R-657/P42, that can be dated to the period 850 - 900 (Petersen [1928](#), p. 51). There was a brooch of Irish origin, 17 glass beads, 1 amber bead, and several textile fragments. Finally, there was part of a spindle whorl made of bone, 20-25 relatively small (and fragmented) iron rivets with pieces of wood preserved by the rust, and a curved iron mount. The curved iron mount is of a type known from boat graves, and the rivets are thus identified as part of a boat.

Haug 4. Rund, 10 m i tverrm. Utgravet av usakkyndige. Herved funnet 2 skålspenner av type R.657, irsk beslagstk. av bronse, 17 perler av glass og 1 av rav, fragm. av spinnehjul av br. ler, 20-25 klinknagler med fastrustet tre, samt et krummet beslagstk., vissnok av en båt. T.16136.  
*Petersen, 1942*

Due to the circumstances of the dig, there is no documentation of the exact position of the brooches and other remains. According to Lieutenant Th. Hegset (1941, paraphrased in the [finds register](#) at NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet), the oval brooches were in the centre of the mound, at a depth of approximately 0.6 m. The brooches were found on top of each other, with the textile remains preserved in the innermost brooch.

F. ved usakkyndig graving i en haug (no. 4) på samme gravplass på Vernes, Stjørdal. Haugen var rund og ca. 10 m i tverrm. Funnet ble tatt vare på av løytnant Th. Hegset, som har opplyst at spennene lå omtrent i haugens midte, i en dybde av ca. 0,6 m. Skålspennene skulde ha vært hvelvet den ene over den annen, således at tøyrestene bare heftet til den innerste av dem. Denne forskyvning av spennenes plass må dog i tilfelle ha funnet sted i senere tid. Der skulde også være iaktatt brent stein hist og her samt aske og kull særlig i nærheten av graven. Denne er dog sikkert en skjelettgrav.  
*NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet, finds register.*

### The textiles from the grave

The textiles were examined by Blindheim ([1945](#)) five years after the excavation. There were small textile fragments still within one of the oval brooches. Inmost in the brooch was a twined woollen string that had been looped around the pin hinge and tied around it. On top of it was another string, possibly of wool. Like the first string, it had been wound around the pin hinge and tied near the pin catch.

Further out there was a small piece of woollen diamond twill that had been folded over at one edge and hemmed. Finally, there was a piece of rougher tabby, possibly linen, laying in a short loop around the pin hinge (Blindheim 1945, p. 144).

*Photograph: Blindheim (1945, PL X)*

Innerst mot spennens skall ligger en tvunnet snor, - nå delvis løs, men den har vært ført i en løkke om nålehodet og knyttet om dette. Snoren er tvunnet av to ullgarnstråder som begge består av fire totrådede, s-tvunnete tråder. Tvinningen er jevn og fin. Litt lenger ute og nå helt fastrustet til nålehodet ligger det nok en snor. Om også den er av ull, kan en ikke si med sikkerhet. Den ligger som den første tråden, i en løkke om nålehodet, og endene er knyttet på oversiden av dette rett ovenfor nåleskjeden.

Utenfor disse snorene kommer det så en liten bite av et stoff som har vært brettet om og fallet, så det er tydelig at vi her har kanten av et eller annet plagg. Det er nok igjen til at en kan se at det har vært et fint ullstoff, vevet i gåsøyemønster, men tetthetsgraden kan ikke avgjøres. Ytterst er det rester av et annet, noe grovere, toskaftet



stoff, muligens et linstoff. Det ligger, etter det en nå kan se, i en kort løkke om nålehodet.  
*Blindheim 1945, p. 144*

When Blindheim examined the find, most of the textiles had been separated from the brooches and stored as two lumps of textile material (Blindheim 1945, p. 144). The first lump contained four layers of textiles. Two layers were of a woollen diagonal twill, partly laying in folds with traces of a very rough weave inside. Several fragments of fine woollen diamond twill lay close to the diagonal twill.

There was a second lump of fabric that Blindheim believes originally lay on top of one of the brooches. This contained more fragments of the fine diamond twill. The largest piece was laying on top of a diagonal twill (probably the same type as in the other lump of textiles). On top of these fabrics were the fragments of an animal hide with long hairs. Finally, closest to the brooch, there was a tiny piece of a very rough woollen fabric woven in a two two-colour check pattern (Blindheim 1945, p. 146-147).



Photograph: [Universitetsmuseenes Fotoportal](#), textiles from T 16136, [large version \(1.2 MB\)](#)

Den løse klumpen inneholdt i alt fire lag tøy, men to av lagene viste seg å inneholde ett og samme stoff - en diagonalbinding. Den lå dels i folder og inni disse lå det biter av et meget grovt stoff (Pl. X fig. 2 d). Tett inntil det diagonalmønstrete stoffet lå rester av et fint ullstoff i gåsøyemønster (Pl. IX fig. 2 d). Tettheten er ca 32 tråder pr cm. På to av bitene er det i den ene kanten en smal fall, som den på det fine ullstoffet inne i spennen. Til det ene hefter det en liten stump av et vevet bånd som vevteknisk er ganske interessant. <...> Det er festet til fallen på det fine ullstoffet med enkle kastesting (Fig. 1c). Som en ser av tegningen og fotografiet, hefter det en liten bite lin(?) også til dette stykket. Formen på denne biten er litt uklar, men det ser snarest ut til at det er kløvet i to lisser eller smale bånd.

Den tredje tøyklumpen, som skal ha ligget oppå den innerste av spennene, inneholdt flere stykker av det samme fine ulltøyet som den andre klumpen. Det største stykket lå fast presset oppå et stykke av en vanlig firskafet diagonalalkypert (Pl. IX, fig 2 a). Det er visstnok rester av det samme stoffet som lå i den løse klumpen.

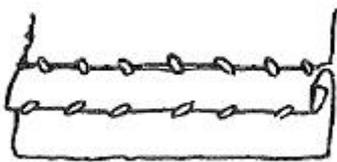
Tetthetsgraden er i hvert fall så vidt det nå lar seg avgjøre, den samme (ca. 13 tråder pr cm). Oppå disse to stoffene lå det så opprinnelig biter av en skinnfell med lange hår. Endelig lå det innerst mot spennens skall et ganske lite stykke av et meget grovt løst ullstoff - vevet i to farger i rutemønster (Pl. IX, fig. 2c).  
*Blindheim 1945, p. 144-147*

### Diamond twill fragments

In addition to the tiny twill fragment inside the oval brooch, five fragments of the diamond twill currently survives. The twill is very finely woven, with ca 32 threads per cm, and each diamond is ca 0.5 cm wide and 0.4 cm high.



Photograph: [Universitetsmuseenes Fotoportal](#), diamond twill fragments from T 16136, [large version \(19.7 MB\)](#)



The largest of the diamond twill fragments have a 0.3 - 0.4 cm wide hem, where the fabric has been folded twice and stitched in place. A woven band has been whip stitched to the edge.

Illustration: *Blindheim (1945, p. 145)*

There is one more diamond twill piece that show evidence of a hem. Along one of the sides, ca. 3.3 cm of the hem has been preserved. The fragment is torn on the remaining three sides. One of the sides is folded, but there is no trace of stitches or other indications that this fold was part of the construction of the dress. It is thus likely that the fold happened in the grave.

Photograph: *NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Agnes Raaness, T 16136 - fragment of diamond twill with hem, [large version \(0.6 MB\)](#)*



Folds also show up in two of the remaining three pieces of diamond twill; one has a fold in the middle of the fragment, and the other is folded along one of the sides. However, there is no trace of stitches or other indications that these folds are intentional instead of being a result of the deterioration in the grave.

### **Diagonal twill fragments**

The diagonal twill was found in both of the lumps of textiles examined by Blindheim (1945, p. 144, 146-147). It is woven with ca 13 threads per cm. According to Blindheim, one of the lumps contained two layers of diagonal twill, partly laying in folds with traces of a very rough weave inside.

The largest fragment still has two layers of twill pressed together. In addition, one fragment has been folded twice, in a shape similar to a box pleat.



*Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - fragments of diagonal twill, [large version](#) (4.7 MB)*

There is also a fragment that appears to have been folded, and has the remains of a semi-circular opening. The opening encircles a small piece of non-textile material, possibly the remains of a button or pin of some kind.

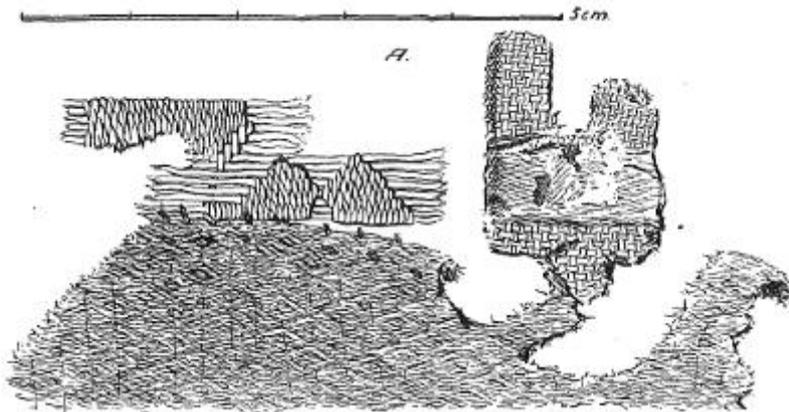
*Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Agnes Raaness, T 16136 - close-up of fragment of diagonal twill with non-textile material, [large version](#) (1 MB)*



## Linen fragments

According to Blindheim (1945, p. 144) there was a small piece of tabby fabric (possibly linen) that appears to be split into two narrow straps of some sort attached to the largest diamond twill fragment. Although the tabby fragments are currently stored separated from the twill, Blindheim's sketch shows how they were attached when she examined the find.

Close examination of these tabby fragments show that the weave is stretched in a manner that may indicate that the fabric was pulled on when it was worn.



Illustrations: Blindheim (1945, p. 145)



Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - fragments of linen, [large version \(2.5 MB\)](#)

## Woollen strings

Among the textiles from grave T 16136 stored by NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet, there are two small woollen string fragments.

One is a twined string, currently ca. 4.4 cm long and 0.3 cm wide. Comparing the photograph of the brooch in Blindheim's report (1945) with more current photos taken by the museum reveal that this string fragment is part of the twined string that Blindheim found inmost in the oval brooch. According to Blindheim (1945, p. 144), the string was made of two yarns, both consisting of four two-ply, s-spun, woollen threads, that have been twisted together.

The other string is braided. It is not clear where it comes from. Blindheim mentions a second string inside the oval brooch, but as it was rusted to the brooch it is unlikely to have been removed, especially in such good condition as the braided fragment.



Braided string



Twined string

Photographs: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Agnes Raaness, T 16136 - fragment of woollen strings, [large version braided string \(0.7 MB\)](#) and [large version twined string \(0.6 MB\)](#)

Innerst mot spennens skall ligger en tvunnet snor, - nå delvis løs, men den har vært ført i en løkke om nålehodet og knyttet om dette. Snoren er tvunnet av to ullgarnstråder som begge består av fire totrådede, s-tvunnete tråder. Tvinningen er jevn og fin. Litt lenger ute og nå helt fastrustet til nålehodet ligger det nok en snor. Om også den er av ull, kan en ikke si med sikkerhet. Den ligger som den første tråden, i en løkke om nålehodet, og endene er knyttet på oversiden av dette rett overfor nåleskjeden.

*Blindheim 1945, p. 144*

## Woollen woven band

There was a woven band attached to one of the diamond twill fragments. It is preserved in its full width (1.1 cm, 14 threads) at one place (Blindheim 1945, p. 144).

### Front of woven band



Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Tonje Årolilja Størseth Digre, T 16136 - front of woven band, stitched to diamond twill fragment, [large version \(1.5 MB\)](#)

### Back of woven band



Photograph: [Universitetsmuseenes Fotoportal](#), T 16136 - back of woven band, stitched to diamond twill fragment, [large version \(1.5 MB\)](#)

### Pattern

The warp (wool) is uncovered in some places, creating what appears to be geometric shapes at regular intervals.



Illustration: Blindheim (1945, p. 145)

### Structure of weave

The preserved weft (red wool) is woven over two threads and under one. Blindheim (p. 145) states that "next time, everything is moved one thread forward and the time after one thread back". However, when weaving the band, Raness (2019) finds that this does not produce the right result.

According to her, the structure of the weave is that everything was moved one thread forward two times, before moving one thread back.

The weaving technique used to create the band is also known from the Oseberg tapestries (Blindheim 1945, p. 144-145).

Det er på et sted bevart i full bredde, så denne kan fastslås, den er 1,1 cm. Som en kan se ligger renningen åpen på visse partier. Den har bestått av 14 tråder. Det er ikke bevart store biten av båndet, men nok til at en kan se at de åpne partiene kommer igjen så regelmessig at det må være gjort med hensikt. De partiene, der det fins islett, viser at denne har vært ført inn over to og under en tråd. Neste gang er så det hele rykket en tråd fram og neste gang igjen en tilbake. (Se skjematisk framstilling av bindingen fig. 1b.) Det er dette som er den vanligste av alle bunnbindingene på figurene på Osebergvevlene. <...> Mønsteret har tydeligvis vært rent geometrisk <...>

*Blindheim 1945, p. 144-145*

## Brooches and beads

The oval brooches in the grave are of the type R-657/P 42. This type of brooch is double-shelled, with an upper shell with decorative figures enhanced by twined silver wire running along grooves in the pattern. Unlike some of the most widespread oval brooch-types that were more or less mass-produced in copies of varying quality, the R-657/P 42 brooches that have been found are almost always high quality pieces. (Petersen 1928, p. 44-46). They are dated to the period 850-900 (Petersen 1928, p. 51) .

**R. 657.** Den type som nu skal behandles er vel den skjønneste av vikingetidens typer av ovale bronsespænder. Ornamentene er smakfuldt oppbygget og vel utført, i listene mellem knappene og rundt knappene og spændens ytterkant er der fint arbeidet tvundet sølvtraad. Det er delikate stykker, som hører blandt det bedste av hvad vikingetidens bronsesmeder kunde præstere. Typen har hat de 9 løse knopper som R. 647 og R. 650 og samme feltinddeling som variant D. <...>

Mens R. 647 og endnu mere R. 652 og R. 654 har været gjenstand for masseproduktion og en mekanisk kopiering, saa kan dette ingenlunde sies i den grad om R. 657. Denne type er altid eller næsten altid gode stykker, og bronsesmedene maa under arbeidet med denne ha gjort sig mere flid. Den staar ubetinget paa et høiere nivaa end de andre typer. <...>

Sammenfatter man resultatene av de kronologiske undersøkelser, gir disse vel anledning til at man kan si at typen begynner like før midten av 9. aarh. Den mulighet kan ihvertfald ikke utelukkes. Vi har fire myntfund med disse spænder med mynter som ikke kan være præget efter 842. Ved disse kommer vi helst til ca. 850 som Montelius sætter typen til; men der er temmelig vidt raaderum for den. Fundkombinationene med smykker viser helst yngre Osebergstil som vel ogsaa bør føre til samme tid eller kanskje heller litt yngre som vi senere skal høre. Til yngre tid bringes vi ogsaa av det ene fund med R. 652 og det fra Gislevold i Ullensaker som viser hen til slutten av aarhundredet. Vi maa da vel ha den mulighet for øie at denne vakre type har været anvendt hele 9. aarhundrede ut.

*Petersen 1928, p. 44-46, 51*

The finds register (NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet) describes the two brooches in T 16136 as well-made and typical specimens of R 657, with pronounced bird figures, without degeneration. The metal buds and the twined silver wire are currently missing. Likewise, the collar of the lower shell is damaged. It appears to have been decorated with a row of stamped triangles. There is a double pin hinge, and parts of the iron pin with residues of textiles attached.



Photograph: [Universitetsmuseenes Fotoportal](#), oval brooches from T 16136

2 ovale skålspenner av bronse av typen R. 657, cfr. Jan Petersen: Vikingetidens Smykker, s. 44 ff. Det er meget gode og typiske eksemplarer med utpregede fuglefigurer i dekoren, uten degenerasjon. Knoppene og den tvunne sølvtråd mangler dog. Likeledes er underplatens krave defekt; den sees å ha vært dekorert med en rad av innstemplede, fordypede trekkanter, hvori tre knopper. Dobbelt nålefeste. Dele av nålene av jern med rester av fastrustet tøy.

*NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet, finds register*



*Photograph: Stiklestad Nasjonale Kultursenter and Hilde Thunem, brooch 1 from T 16136, [large version](#) (2.5 MB)*



*Photograph: Stiklestad Nasjonale Kultursenter and Hilde Thunem, brooch 2 from T 16136, [large version](#) (2.2 MB)*

According to Jørgensen ([2008](#), p. 61) the brooches have traces of white metal where the metal buds would have been fastened, but no holes for the silver wire, indicating that there might not have been silver wire decorating this particular pair of brooches.

Knoppene i hjørnefeltene på T16136 er flate med innrisset dekor <...> T16136 har kun noen fragmenterte rester av hvitmetall sittende fast på lange nagler som stikker ut av knoppene. Det har ikke vært boret hull for sølvtråder ved knoppfeltene på T16136, noe som kan antyde at de ikke har vært dekorert med sølvtråder [i motsetning til T3315(1)].

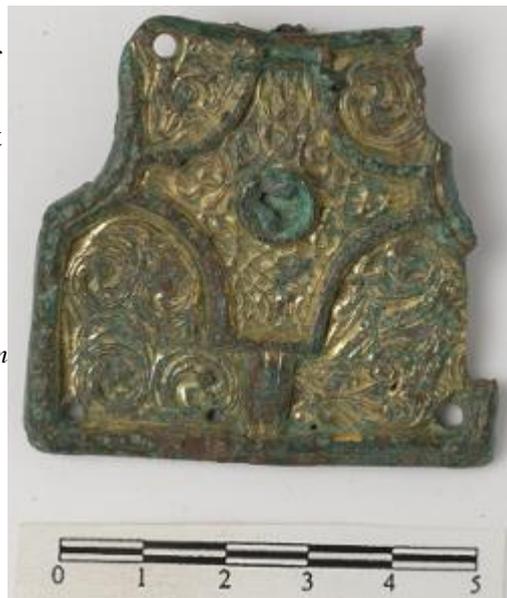
*Jørgensen 2008, p. 61*

### **Brooch of Irish origin**

In addition to the oval brooches, there was a third brooch in the grave, made from a rectangular mount of gilded bronze that has been repurposed as a brooch. It is 5.7 cm x 5.4 cm. The pin catch in bronze survives; it has been fastened with a bronze wire. The wire can be seen on the overside of the brooch, where it crosses two of the lines of the "cross". There is only a fragment of the pin hinge left.

*Photograph: [Universitetsmuseenes Fotoportal](#). Brooch made from Irish metal mounts or clasp, grave T 16136*

At the corners of the brooch is four (now three) holes that would have been used to fasten the mount during its original use, before it was remade as a brooch.



Et irsk, omtrent kvadratisk beslagstykke av bronse, 5,7 X 5,4 cm, omgjort til en spenne (fig. 5). Av den opprinnelige forgylling er intet nu tilbake. Nåleskjeden av bronse er i behold; den har vært festet med en bronsetråd, som på spennens overside griper over to av dekorens ribber. Av nålefestet er bevart et løst fragment. I stykkets 4 hjørner er et hull til de stifter som beslagstykket opprinnelig har vært festet med.

*NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet, finds register*

Wamers (1985, p. 30, 92) believes the mount to be of Irish origin. The motif in the middle is a compressed cross (with a central socket that would have held decorative stone or glass) decorated with braided ornamentation. He further identifies the decoration in the remaining fields as animal ornamentation or spiral- and trumpet-ornamentation, of the same style as the book of Lindisfarne and the so-called Tara brooch.

T. 16136b: Fragment eines Beschlags, Bronze, vergoldet. L. 5,7 cm; Br. 5,5 cm; beschnitten. In den Ecken drei (vier) Löcher zur primären Befestigung. Sekundär zur Fibel umgearbeitet (Anbringung eines Nadelschuhs mittels einer Bronzeklammer, Durchbohrungen). In der Mitte ein gestauchtes Kreuz mit zentraler Fassung und Flechtbandornamentik, in den übrigen Feldern Tier- bzw. Spiral- und Trompetenornamente. Frauengrab der zweiten Hälfte des 9. Jhs. (Hügel Nr. 4 vom Gräberfeld Vernes): zwei ovale Schalenspangen (JP 42), 17 Perlen, Spinnwirtel, 20-25 Niete und Beschlagstücke eines Bootes. Å.T. 1942, 17 f. Abb. 5. Wamers 1985, p. 92.

## Beads

The woman in grave T 16136 was wearing [a single amber bead \(bead 5\)](#) and [17 glass beads](#) of varying size and design.





Photographs: Glass beads from T 16136, combined from photographs from [Universitetsmuseenes Fotoportal](#)

The largest of the beads (4 cm diameter and 2.1 cm high) is made of black glass. Around the edge there are rows of elliptical recesses running across the side of the bead. There are three recesses in each row. In addition, there are traces of recesses on the sides. These are shallow, possibly due to wear on the sides of the bead. The sides of the bead are no longer parallel (if indeed they ever were). The finds register describe the bead as visibly worn and proposes that it was old when it was buried.



Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - black bead side, [large version \(0.3 MB\)](#)

There are several decorated beads; a black bead (9δ) with remains of white glass, a small white bead (9ε) with two equidistant repeating "flowers" of red, white and pale blue opaque glass, a black bead (9β) with a band of red and yellow opaque glass, two black beads (6α, 6β, Callmer [1977](#) type B076O) decorated with randomly placed spots of blue and white opaque glass, and four beads of translucent teal glass (9γ, 7ε 7β, 7δ) with red and white designs. One of these has a red and white sinusoidal band.

Finally, there are seven undecorated beads of glass in various colours.

17 perler av glass og 1 av rav. Herav er 1, av sort glass uten påsmeltet dekor, særlig stor, 4 cm bred, 2 cm høy. Den har rundt kanten en eiendommelig dekor fremkommen ved tverrgående rekker av tre elliptiske fordypninger i hver, et ornament som minner om ringkjeden. Perlen er åpenbart meget slitt og derfor antagelig gammel ved nedleggingen i graven. Således er begge hull ved slit av snoren trukket op mot kanten, så åpningen på begge sider er nesten pæreformet. Det skyldes sikkert også slit at derpå begge sider nu bare sees svake spor av fordypninger, som i likhet med dem rundt kanten også har vært anbragt her. Disse er ikke lenger parallelle, men slitt betydelig ned mot den del av kanten som efter slitet i hullenes åpning viser sig å ha vendt opp.

Derefter kommer 2 adskillig mindre perler, men dog større enn de øvrige, av sortaktig glass med dekor av hvite ringer om et blått felt. Av resten er 8 med forskjellig dekor, 4 av grønt og gullig glass uten dekor, 1 liten perle av rav og 2 "lerperler".

*NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet, finds register*

## **Worn with the brooches: The Viking Age smokkr**

The textile fragments from grave T 16136 are too small to give much information about the garments worn by the woman in the grave. However, the oval brooches indicate that the deceased at least was wearing an apron dress, or as the Norse probably would have called it - a smokkr ([Ewing 2006](#), p. 37).

### **A short summary of significant finds**

Archaeological evidence for the smokkr is known from numerous finds of textile fragments and brooches. Despite that there probably was geographic and chronological variations, the sum of this evidence may provide clues to the shape of the smokkr, and thus to what the woman in grave T 16136 was wearing.

The majority of the smokkr fragments are small fabric loops found inside the brooches, attaching the garment to the brooch. More seldom, fragments from the body of the smokkr itself survive. Two of the most significant finds in this regard are the smokkr fragments from Haithabu harbour and from grave ACQ at Køstrup.

### **Smokkr loops**

From the archaeological evidence, we know that the smokkr, however it may have looked, was held up by two fabric loops at the front and two at the back, and fastened by the oval brooches. Linen loops were usual, even in graves where the smokkr itself was made of wool. For example, only 14 of the 105 Birka graves containing loop fragments had one or more woollen loops (Hägg [1974](#), p. 103-105). When woollen loops were used, they were sometimes made from a simpler fabric than the smokkr, as in Birka grave 973 (Hägg 1974) or grave B 10720 from Sandanger (Holm-Olsen [1976](#)).

A smokkr would leave two loops inside each brooch (front loop at the bottom and back loop at the top). However, a total of 70 of the 105 Birka graves containing smokkr fragments have more than one loop at the top or bottom of the brooches Hägg (1974, p. 103-105). More than two loops per brooch also appear in western Norway (Lukešová [2011](#), Holm-Olsen 1976) and in England (Speed and Walton Rogers, [2005](#)), demonstrating that this is not solely a Birka phenomenon, nor can be attributed to eastern influence on Birka clothing. This indicates that more than two loops inside each brooch was a usual and widespread phenomenon.

## The smokkr from Haithabu harbour

Various excavations of the former Viking settlement of Haithabu, near Schleswig Holstein in Germany, have yielded a large amount of 10th century textile material. A majority of the preserved fragments were found in the harbour. These fragments were the remains of clothing that had been torn up, coated with tar, and used as ship's caulking ([Hägg 1984](#)).

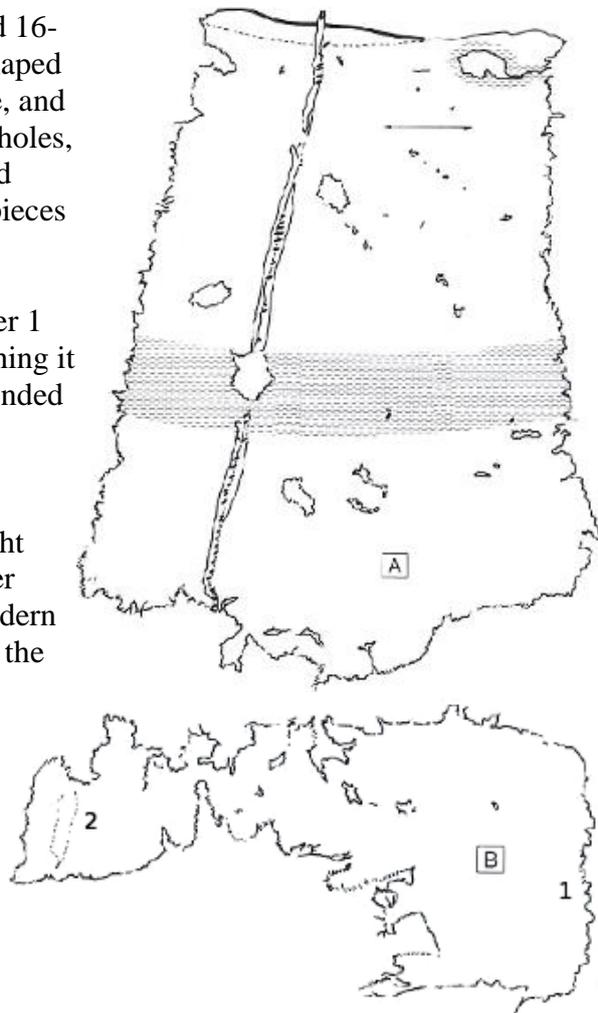
Due to the presence of tar, Haithabu harbour yields unusually well preserved textile fragments. However, the harbour finds provide no information on the position of each fragment on the body. Thus, identification of which garment each fragment belongs to is based solely on their shape.

Two fragments of a fine repped wool tabby were identified as potentially belonging to a smokkr. The fabric had been dyed brown ([Hägg 1984](#), p. 38).

The largest fragment (**H14A**) is 30 cm high and 16-23 cm wide. The fragment is roughly wedge-shaped with one side that has been cut in a straight line, and one that curves slightly. Both sides have stitch holes, thus confirming that the fragment originally had seams along both sides, connecting it to other pieces of the garment.

The upper edge has been created by turning over 1 cm of the selvedge towards the inside and stitching it in place. There is a hole close to the top, surrounded by a felted area. The bottom edge is torn ([Hägg 1984](#), p. 38).

A dart (26.5 cm long) runs parallel to the straight side of the fragment, from 7 cm below the upper edge down to the tear at the bottom. Unlike modern garments, the ridge of the dart appears to be on the outside of the smokkr. The width of the dart varies (2-5 mm), and the widest point is about 15 cm below the top edge. Here the garment shows traces of wear; the cloth is felted in a band across the garment and a hole has been worn through at the dart. A thin braid has been stitched in place on top of the ridge formed by the dart.



*Illustrations: Hägg (1984, p. 39)*

The other fragment (**H14B**) is 12 by 25 cm and is torn at both the top and the bottom. One of the side edges has been preserved, complete with stitch holes (1). The other side is less preserved, and there is no stitch holes. Traces of the dart (2) remain, although not of the braid. This fragment is wider than **H14A**, leading [Hägg \(1984, p. 38\)](#) to postulate that it would have been positioned a bit lower on the body.

## The smokkr from grave ACQ in Køstrup

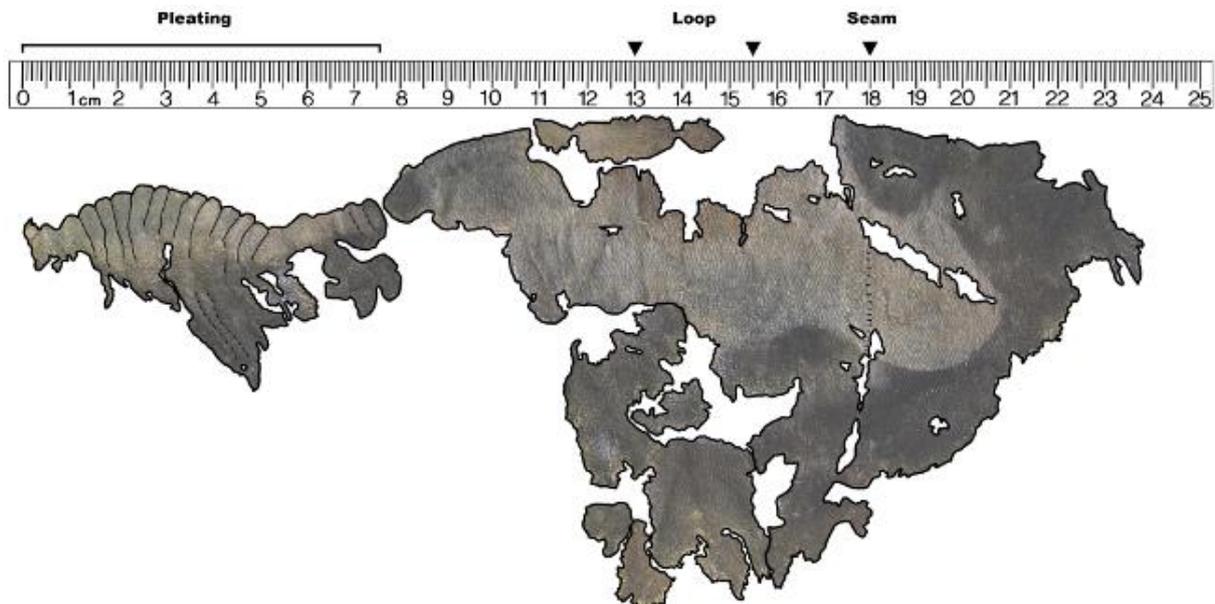
A small graveyard in Køstrup, Fyn in Denmark was excavated in 1980-1981, revealing a grave, referred to as ACQ, where several textile fragments had been preserved. The style of the oval brooches in the grave indicate a date between 850-1000. Lindblom (1993) dates one of the beads to 960-990, placing the grave in the tenth century. However, Delvaux (2017) reclassifies the bead, concluding with a date for the grave between 850 and 860.

Most of the textiles were found in connection with the oval brooches. Inside one brooch was a relatively large fragment of a smokkr, made from woollen tabby (Wielandt 1980, p. 199) and dyed blue (Rasmussen & Lønborg 1993, p. 175).

The upper edge of the smokkr had been created by cutting the fabric parallel to the weft, folding 4-5 mm of the cloth over and overcasting. The remains of a vertical seam join two pieces of the fragment along their selvages by overcast stitches (Wielandt 1980, 193). This seam is currently ca 1.9 cm long, although it originally probably ran from the top to the bottom of the smokkr.

Just below the top of the smokkr were two holes, respectively 2.5 cm and 5 cm from the vertical seam, indicating that the front loop had been fastened here (Wielandt 1980, 193).

The smokkr piece is roughly 25 cm long, running from the middle of the dress, under the brooch and down under the arm. It reaches 10 cm down from the edge. One end of the fragment has tiny pleats, 2-3 mm deep and 3 mm wide (Thunem 2017). The pleated part is currently approximately 7.6 cm long, and starts 11 cm from the vertical seam. The longest pleat is torn 4.3 cm from the top of the smokkr, making it uncertain whether the fabric was just pleated near the top, or if the pleats ran further down.



*Smokkr fragment, illustration by Tor Gjerde and Hilde Thunem*

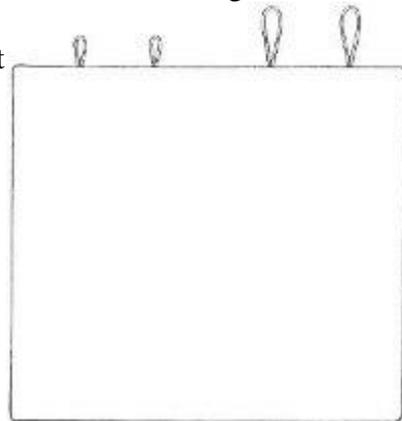
## Theories regarding the shape of the smokkr

Over the years, there have been several theories regarding how a Viking Age smokkr would have been shaped. The differences between them are partly due to the newer interpretations taking into account an increasing amount of relevant finds. However, there are also instances where experts interpret the same evidence and arrive at different conclusions.

### Reconstruction by Agnes Geijer (1938)

Geijer (1938, summarized by Hägg 1974) proposes that the smokkr was a rectangle of cloth that was wrapped around one side of the body. Her interpretation is solely based on the smokkr fragments found at Birka, and ethnographical comparisons with later period dresses from the Baltic area.

She notes that none of the smokkr fragments found at Birka show traces of being shaped by cutting. Instead, there are many fragments with a folded and hemmed edge, and these folds are running along the grain. Even the lining, whenever it is present, is laid parallel to the direction of the weave. Thus, she concludes that the Birka smokkr was not cut and shaped to fit the body. Instead, the fabric was used almost unaltered after leaving the loom (Geijer 1938, summarized by Hägg 1974 p. 53-54).



Comparisons with the Baltic Hurstut dress, first documented in 1776 (referenced in Bau [1981](#), p. 34) leads her to suggest a smokkr created by wrapping a rectangle of fabric around the body, with the selvages creating an opening at one side. When two such smokkrs are worn in overlapping pairs, the side opening of the overdress shows the inner smokkr instead of revealing the serk. Such an arrangement would also result in two loops at the top and two at the bottom of the oval brooches, as is found in many of the graves at Birka.

### Reconstruction by Flemming Bau (1981)

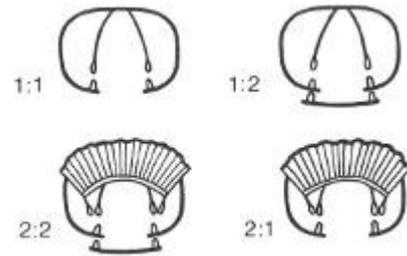
Bau (1981) introduces an alternative interpretation of the Birka evidence. He proposes a rectangular smokkr with an opening in the front instead of the side. His main reasoning is that it is unlikely that the richly decorated tunics found inside the smokkr in some Birka graves would have had their metal tablet-woven bands covered by the smokkr (Bau 1981, p. 28-29). He also argues that none of the female figures found in picture stones and silver figurines from the Viking Age show a side opening of the kind envisioned by Geijer.

Furthermore, he proposes that the figurines can be used to identify two garments worn in combination with the smokkr; a separable train (starting from the shoulders) and a separable apron fastened on the woman's chest (Bau 1981, p. 16). Similar open-fronted skirts with a separable apron can be found in eastern European and Russian folk costumes from the 1700s.

He introduces the following explanations for the various number of loops found in brooches at Birka (Bau 1981, p. 25):

- 1 loop at the bottom and one at the top: a smokkr
- 2 loops at the bottom and 1 loop at the top: a smokkr plus a separable apron

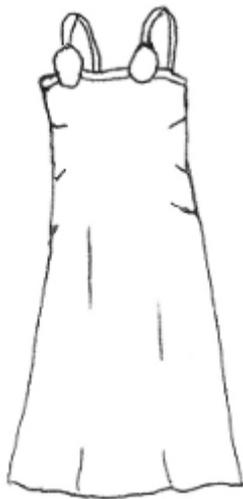
- 2 loops at the bottom and 2 at the top: a smokkr plus a separable apron and train
- 1 loop at the bottom and 2 loops at the top: a smokkr plus a separable train



Larsson (2008) uses the same interpretation when proposing a reconstruction of a smokkr found at Pskov in Russia.

### Reconstruction by Inga Hägg (1974, 1984 and 1986)

Hägg (1974, 1984, 1986) proposes a third theory. Basing her interpretation mainly on the archaeological evidence from Birka and Haithabu, she suggests that the smokkr was a closed tube, sometimes tailored to fit the body.



She notes that all fragments from the top of the smokkr at Birka have the upper edge running horizontally across the entire width of the oval brooch, indicating that the sides of the smokkr were held close to the body. A closed smokkr would be a natural continuation of the woollen peplos of Huldremose type that were in use during the early Iron Age (Hägg 1974, p. 54-57).

More importantly, the Haithabu smokkr fragments have a narrow cut (and a dart), indicating that it fit closely to the upper part of the body, and then flared out over the hips (Hägg 1984, p. 42). In other words, this was a tailored garment. The tailoring makes it unlikely that it was left open, whether in the side or in front, and thus strongly indicate that the smokkr formed a closed tube around the body.

With the Haithabu evidence in mind, Hägg also classifies the Birka smokkr as being a tailored type of garment (Hägg 1986, p. 62). This is a clear departure from Geijer's belief that the smokkr at Birka was made of fabric almost unaltered from the loom.

Hägg agrees with Geijer that the smokkr were sometimes worn in pairs, resulting in more than two loops per oval brooch. At Birka the inmost smokkr was often made of linen, while the outer could be either linen or wool. She also notes that there are significantly more loops found at the bottom of the brooches at Birka than at the top (Hägg 1974, p. 49). Furthermore, whenever silk loops appear they are usually found at the bottom, indicating that they have a specific function to fulfil on the *front* of the garment. Hägg proposes that these loops were not part of the smokkr, but instead was used to hang different tools from the brooches (explaining why some tools are found with silk fragments attached). Some of the long linen loops found at the bottom of the brooches probably had the same function.

### My conclusion: A dress that encloses the body

When considering the shape of the smokkr, it is relevant to note that although the oval brooches vary in their artwork, with different patterns emerging and disappearing as time passes, their basic shape and function stay the same during the entire Viking age. They also stay in the same position on the body, indicating that the smokkr did the same, and that it kept needing the brooches in that exact position. This is a strong indication that the *general* function and shape of the garment worn with the brooches remained constant.

Most of the smokkr interpretations with front or side openings were proposed at a time when there were few finds of Viking textiles, and the ethnographical material used by Geijer (1938, cited in Hägg 1974) and Bau (1981) provided the only source of comparative garments. Currently, however, there are numerous finds of smokkr fragments from many different locations. While we cannot simply piece them together without regards to geography or time period, the collective find material provides a much better basis for reconstructing the general shape of the smokkr, than e.g. later period Baltic clothing.

The fragment from grave ACQ in Køstrup is perhaps one of the most significant pieces in regards to discovering the underlying shape of the smokkr. Regardless of whether the pleating was placed in the front or on the side of this smokkr, there is 10-13 cm of the upper edge preserved *on either side of the loop*. This excludes the possibility of a frontal opening, and makes it unlikely that the smokkr was open at the side that is preserved.

Furthermore, the presence of a vertical seam 2.5 - 5 cm from the loop provides a strong argument against an opening anywhere. It is unlikely that one would sew together two (or more) pieces of fabric *along the selvedges*, and then leave e.g. one side open. In conclusion, the archaeological evidence from grave ACQ clearly indicate a smokkr that enclosed the body of the woman wearing it, with no openings in either the front or sides.

The fragments from Haithabu harbour further support the interpretation of the smokkr as a closed garment. They form a wedge-shaped piece that had been stitched to other pieces along both sides. The top of the fragment was only 16 cm long, and its slimness as well as its shape (wider at the bottom than the top) indicates that this was a tailored garment, probably with several panels. The tailoring makes it unlikely that it was left open, whether at the side or the front. As the Haithabu smokkr fragments were found in the harbour, we cannot be certain that they belonged to a smokkr. However, the Køstrup find means that the evidence for a closed smokkr is not dependent on the Haithabu fragments.

Based on this evidence, I believe that the general underlying shape of a smokkr was a closed tube of some kind, with fabric loops held up by the oval brooches.

As mentioned above, more than two loops per brooch appears to have been a usual and widespread phenomenon, appearing in Birka, western Norway and England. While multiple loops may be interpreted in several ways (tool bands, extra smokkr etc.), depending on the number of extra loops, some of the finds are clearly two smokkrs being worn one on top of the other. At the same time, more than 30 graves at Birka have two (or less) loops in each brooch (Hägg 1974, p. 103-105). Many of these would have contained a single smokkr. Furthermore, some of the graves with multiple loops can be interpreted as a single smokkr with tools hanging from the brooches. This is e.g. the case for grave ACQ at Køstrup (Rasmussen & Lønborg 1993).

Thus, there is evidence for smokkrs both being worn alone and in pairs. When worn in pairs, the inner smokkr could be made of linen (Hägg 1974, p. 50), or wool (grave C at Kaupang: Ingstad [1979](#), grave B 10720: Holm-Olsen 1976, and grave B 9060: Lukešová 2011).

# Interpreting T 16136

## Smokkr and serk

As mentioned above, the presence of oval brooches, especially combined with a small fragment of fabric (in this case diamond twill) with a hemmed edge, is a clear indication that the woman in grave T 16136 was wearing at least one smokkr.

According to the finds register the oval brooches were reportedly found on top of each other, a displacement that would have happened long after the burial. The original position of the brooches is thus lost to time. However, evidence from other graves indicate that oval brooches were worn on the upper area of the chest (Hägg [2009](#), Thunem [2019](#)), and there is no reason that grave T 16136 should be different in this respect.

## Blindheim's interpretation

When interpreting the evidence from grave T 16136, Blindheim turns to the then recently published theory by Agnes Geijer (1938, summarized in Hägg 1974) regarding the shape of the smokkr. According to Geijer, smokkr were usually worn in pairs, with the outer one often being of a finer fabric than the inner one. Thus Blindheim (1945, p. 156-157) proposes that the woman in T 16136 was wearing two smokkr.

She interprets the linen loop inside one of the brooches and the small pieces of linen found in the grave as an inner smokkr made from linen. The fine diamond twill is interpreted as an outer smokkr, decorated with a woven band, and possibly held up by the twined strings.

Strings used as loops is not known from the Birka material. However, Blindheim suggests that two other graves may have used strings to fasten their smokkr (Blindheim 1945, p. 147, 158). Grave **T 16137** at Værnes appears to have one or two strings entwined with a loop made of tabby fabric. **C 26936** at Tråstad has one loop made of fabric (linen?), small fragments of a string outside of the loop, and a fine string that has been tied to the pin. Finally, she mentions that according to different finds registers there are two additional finds (**B 8953** and **B 9060**) that may have strings used as loops. Thus, she concludes that the use of strings as loops was a fairly widespread fashion in Norway.

Inni den ene av spennene fra haug 7 [T 16137] sitter det igjen noen tekstilrester omkring nålehodet. Her er det ennå vanskeligere å få øye på detaljene, men en kan tydelig skjelne <..> en eller to tvunne snorer innfiltret i et stoff, som ligger rundt nålehodet det og, som en stropp eller liknende. Det viste seg at det er toskaftet.

*Blindheim 1945, p. 147*

<..> Den andre av Vernesgravene er det mindre å få ut av, her var tekstilrestene som vi husker ganske gjennomtrukket av rust. Men den lille resten av snor forteller oss at bruken av tvunne tråder som seler ikke har vært så rent sjelden, og dette bekreftes ytterligere av et funn fra Tråstad nordre, Vinger, Hedmark, som vi fikk inn til Oldsaksamlingen i 1939. Det inneholdt bl.a. to ovale spenner med sterkt oppløste gripedyrsmotiver. I den best bevarte sitter det litt tøyrester igjen rundt nålen. En kan skjelne to stropper som ligger i en 8-tallslokke rundt nålehode og stilk. En er av stoff (lin?), og utenfor denne er det små rester av en tvunnet snor. I enden av nålehodet er det dessuten knyttet fast en meget finere snor. I graven fant en også små rester av ulltøyer i minst tre ulike kvaliteter, et fint og et grovere gåsøyemønster og en eller muligens to diagonalkyperter. Dessverre er funnopplysningene for magre til at vi kan få noe ut av dem. En må ellers nevne at det etter opplysninger i tilvekstfortegnelsene ser ut til at det også i Bergens Museum ligger noen funn med rester av slike snorer brukt som seler. Så det later til å ha vært en ganske utbredt mote her i landet iallfall.

*Blindheim 1945, p. 158*

Usually, if strings were holding up a smokkr, one should expect one to be wound around the pin at the top and one at the bottom of the brooch. In grave T 16136 however, they are both wound around the pin at the *bottom* of the brooch. Blindheim suggests that a possible explanation is that the upper string has stretched during use, and then has been tightened by looping it around the bottom of the pin.

There is no trace of the serk, but Blindheim notes that this is to be expected if it was made of linen. (Blindheim 1945, p. 157).

Tiden skulle da være inne til at vi kunne vende tilbake til utgangspunktet vårt, dragtrestene inni spennene fra Vernes. Jevnfører vi nå våre iakttagelser derfra med Agnes Geijers resultater fra Birkafunnene og det andre materialet vi har trukket fram, kommer vi naturlig fram til følgende: Kvinnen <...> må etter det en kan skjønne ha hatt på seg to plagg av seleskjørtypen. Det innerste har vært av lin; de små bitene av dette stoffet som funnet inneholder, var jo, som vi så, høyst sannsynlig rester av stropper. Den ene av disse hefter jo til og med til nålehodet på spennen.

Utenpå dette kom det plagg av fint, gåsøyemønstret ullstoff som må ha vært holdt oppe av de tvunne snorene. En lengre (den som nå ligger delvis løs inne i spennen) kom fra ryggsiden, og en kortere (den som nå ligger tett inntil nålehodet, helt fastrustet til dette) kom fra forsiden. Begge to har vært festet til nålehodet. I funnene fra Birka var den ene festet til nålehodet, det andre til nåleskjeden. Årsaken til at begge våre snorer er festet til nålehodet, er vel den at snorer har lett for å tøyse seg litt, og så har en strammet dem på dette viset.

Formodentlig er det dette plagget det fine båndet har sittet på. Det er nemlig tydelig at alle de små stykkene av det fine ullstoffet skriver seg fra ett og samme stoff. Finhetsgraden er praktisk talt den samme - varierer bare fra 32 til 35 tråder per cm, og så pass ujevnhet må en regne med å finne på stoffer som har ligget så lenge i jorden. Det ligger da nær å anta at også det lille stykke gåsemønstret stoff som sitter fast inni spennen er det samme, selv om finhetsgraden som nevnt ikke lar seg avgjøre lenger.

Av underplagg fins det ikke spor, men etter det vi har sett, må vi vel ha lov til å regne med at et slikt har hørt til drakten. Har det vært av lin, er det ikke annet enn vi kunne vente at det er totalt forsvunnet.  
*Blindheim 1945, p. 156 - 157*

## **A new look at the evidence**

When Blindheim analysed grave T 16136 in 1945, there were few finds she could use for comparison, and there was only one theory regarding how the garment fastened by the oval brooches would have looked. Reconsidering the evidence in light of the increased knowledge and new finds that have emerged over the years may thus yield a different conclusion.

The main reason Blindheim proposes that the woman in T 16136 was wearing two smokkr is that this is the usual configuration according to Geijer. However, while two overlapping smokkr are integral to Geijer's theory, if the smokkr is closed, it can be worn alone (as is the case in e.g. grave ACQ from Køstrup). Thus, the first step is to revisit the question of how many smokkr the woman was wearing.

We know that there was at least one smokkr, made of woollen diamond twill, as evidenced by the tiny twill fragment with a hemmed edge found inside the brooch, and the larger twill fragment with a hemmed edge and woven band. This smokkr would have been held up by some kind of loops, either the linen loop still left in the brooch, or the woollen strings (as suggested by Blindheim).

From other smokkr finds, we know that the smokkr was fastened by fabric loops (often made from linen). However, Blindheim (1945, p 158) suggests the use of strings as loops was usual

in Norway. She bases her theory on the three graves (**T 16136**, **T 16137** and **C 26936**) that have strings in the brooches, and two more graves (**B 8953** and **B 9060**) described in the find registers as having smokkr fragments fastened by strings.

It is worth noting however, that all three graves examined by Blindheim has at least one fabric loop in addition to the strings, and thus her identification of the strings as loops is closely tied to an assumption that the women were wearing two smokkr. Furthermore Lukešová (2011) has examined B 9960, and reports the presence of five straps in one of the brooches, and four in the other. She does not mention any strings. I would therefore treat the evidence that Blindheim has gained solely from finds registers with caution.

Returning to grave T 16136, it is possible to discern the stratigraphy of the textiles still preserved inside the brooch by closely following Blindheim's description, and the photographs taken by NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet.

Innerst mot spennens skall ligger en tvunnet snor, - nå delvis løs, men den har vært ført i en løkke om nålehodet og knyttet om dette. Snoren er tvunnet av to ullgarnstråder som begge består av fire totrådede, s-tvunnete tråder. Tvinningen er jevn og fin. Litt lenger ute og nå helt fastrustet til nålehodet ligger det nok en snor. Om også den er av ull, kan en ikke si med sikkerhet. Den ligger som den første tråden, i en løkke om nålehodet, og endene er knyttet på oversiden av dette rett ovenfor nåleskjeden. Utenfor disse snorene kommer det så en liten bite av et stoff som har vært brettet om og fallet, så det er tydelig at vi her har kanten av et eller annet plagg. Det er nok igjen til at en kan se at det har vært et fint ullstoff, vevet i gåsøyemønster, men tetthetsgraden kan ikke avgjøres. Ytterst er det rester av et annet, noe grovere, toskaftet stoff, muligens et linstoff. Det ligger, etter det en nå kan se, i en kort løkke om nålehodet.

*Blindheim 1945, p. 144*

If we follow Blindheim's description, the following stratigraphy emerges.

(1) Closest to the inside of the shell of the brooch is a twined string; now partially loose, but which has been threaded in a loop around the pin hinge and tied around it. The string is twined from two woolen yarns, both consisting of four two-ply, s-spun threads. The twining is even and neat.

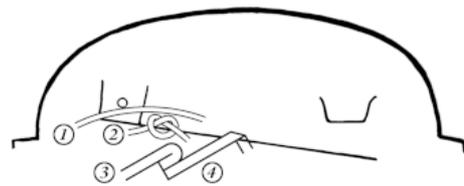
(2) Slightly further from the shell and now entirely fastened by rust to the pin hinge is a second string. Whether this too is made from wool cannot be ascertained. Like the first string, it lies in a loop around the pin hinge, and its ends are tied on the body-facing side of the pin where this protrudes from the sheath fastening it to the hinge.

(3) Further from the shell than these strings is a small piece of fabric that has been folded and stitched, so it is clear that here we have the edge of a garment. Enough remains that it can be recognised as a fine woolen fabric, woven in goose eye pattern; though the thread density cannot be determined.

(4) Furthest from the shell lie remnants of another, somewhat coarser, tabby fabric, possibly linen. From what can now be seen, it lies in a short loop about the pin hinge.



*Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet, T 16136 - back of the brooch with textile fragments, [large version \(25 MB\)](#)*



*Sketch of stratigraphy by Tor Gjerde and Hilde Thunem, based on Blindheim's description and photo of brooch*

*Translation of Blindheim 1945, p. 144, numbers added to connect the text in the description with the illustration*

From the stratigraphy, we can see that the strings are placed in the layer furthest away from the body, *in front* of the woollen smokkr-fabric. This is not the usual position for a smokkr loop. Whenever fabric loops have been found still attached to the smokkr (e.g. Birka grave 464, Hägg 1974 and B 10720, Holm-Olsen 1976) they are stitched to the *inside* of the smokkr, while loops found in front of the smokkr tend to be tool bands.

It is of course still possible to argue that the strings in T 16136 were smokkr loops, e.g. by proposing that the lower loop was fastened on the inside of the woollen smokkr, and then drawn through a hole in the fabric (leaving the majority of the loop in front of the dress). However, before introducing a completely new way of constructing a loop, it is relevant to consider how strings have been used in other grave finds.

Bead-strings are known from several graves (e.g. grave 182-185/1960 at Haithabu, Hägg [1991, p. 148](#), and grave ACQ at Køstrup, Wielandt 1980, 193). Strings have also been used as decoration along the top of the smokkr (e.g. in Birka, Hägg 1974, p. 53), and stitched along a tablet woven band (e.g. in grave ACQ at Køstrup, Wielandt 1980, and grave B at Kaupang, Ingstad 1979, p. 158-159).

One of the strings in T 16136 was clearly tied around the pin with the knot still preserved. This excludes its use as decoration along the smokkr, but fits well with being a bead-string. Furthermore, if both strings were holding beads, it would explain why they were both wound around the pin hinge, instead of one at the bottom, and one at the top of the brooch, as in the case of smokkr loops. Finally, beads were worn in the front of the dress, something that fits with the stratigraphy found inside the brooch.



*Illustrations: Blindheim (1945, p. 145)* *Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - fragments of linen, [large version \(2.5 MB\)](#)*

If the strings are holding the beads, the only smokkr loop preserved in the brooch is the one made from (linen) fabric. It is in the correct stratigraphic layer to have been fastened to the inside of the diamond twill smokkr. In addition, if the diamond twill smokkr was fastened by linen loops, it would explain why a small piece of tabby (probably linen) split into two narrow straps was found attached at the hem of the largest diamond twill fragment.

The piece of tabby has fragmented further in the care of the museum, but the sketch by Blindheim (1945, p. 144) show straps that are roughly 0.6 cm wide, well within the interval of loop widths known from other finds. Finally, the tabby fragments still in care of the museum show indication of having been pulled on, as can be expected from a loop carrying the weight of the smokkr.

Thus, I conclude that the woman in T 16136 was most likely wearing a single smokkr of fine woollen diamond twill, decorated by a woven band that had been stitched along the top. The smokkr was held up by linen loops (similar to what is found at Birka). Only one of the two loops survive inside the brooch, but this is as expected due to the poor preservation conditions for linen. A couple of strings looped and tied around the pin hinge were holding the beads.



*Photograph: Hilde Thunem. Stratigraphy according to the description by Blindheim; two woollen strings tied around the pin, on top of linen loops.*

When interpreting the evidence this way, there is no need to introduce an inner smokkr of linen, of which little to nothing remains. I do however agree with Blindheim that there would have been an underdress, and that it in all probability was made from linen.

### **Reconstruction: Proceeding from a small fragment to a whole garment**

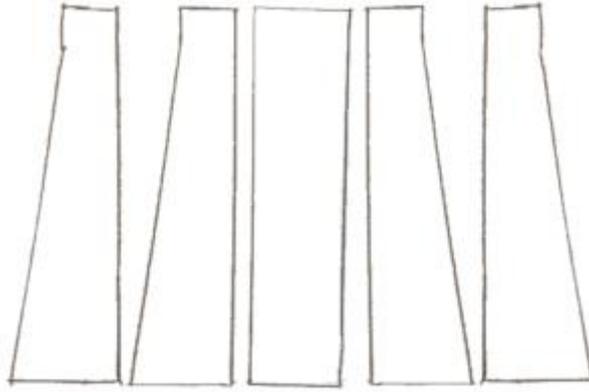
From the archaeological evidence, we know that there was a smokkr made from fine diamond twill, and that it had a roughly 3-4 mm wide hem at the top. Aside from the hemmed edge, there are no traces of seams. However, the surviving fragments are tiny, and thus give very little information regarding the shape of the garment they were part of.

One alternative when reconstructing a garment where so little is known is to make the unknown parts of the smokkr as "neutral" as possible, e.g. creating it as a simple tube of fabric enclosing the body, sewn together in one side or the back. However, this peplos-type garment would not fit well with the smokkr evidence from Haithabu, nor with the tailoring seen in other Norse garments worn at the same time.

*Photograph: Hilde Thunem. The smokkr is made from a diamond twill of the same fineness as the find. It is plant dyed blue, as the fabric in the find currently have a hint of blue (no dye analysis have been done on the find).*

With this in mind, I decided to create a smokkr made from several separate pieces, and somewhat shaped to fit the body. I chose a rectangular front piece. This fits with what we can deduce from the Køstrup evidence (the pleated piece would probably be rectangular). For the rest of the smokkr, I decided to use four pieces of the same shape as the wedge-shaped piece found in Haithabu harbour. I laid the wedge-shaped pieces with the sloped edge pointing towards the back of the dress. This creates a silhouette with a relatively straight front and fabric sweeping slightly towards the back, reminiscent of some of the Viking Age silver figurines depicting female figures.





The wedge-shaped pieces and rectangular front piece could be laid out in a manner that ensured very little waste, something that would have been important in a time where the labour of creating fabric, especially a weave as fine as the one in T 16136, would have been significant.

The length of the T 16136 fragments measured from the top hem is only a couple of cm.

However, other finds (e.g. Bj. 464, Hägg 1974, 39-40) indicate that the smokkr was at least hip-length. Aside from that, we only have the pictorial evidence, which unfortunately is inconclusive. In the absence of other evidence, I decided on a full-length smokkr for this particular reconstruction.



I created the loops by folding a linen strip into four layers and whipstitching along the side (similar to the loops in grave Bj 835 from Birka, Hägg 1974). I chose a width of roughly 0.6 cm, in accordance with the sketch by Blindheim (1945, p. 145) and the remaining fragments at the museum.

*Illustration from Hägg (1974, p. 130).*

While numerous loop fragments have been preserved at the top of the brooches, none of them are found attached to smokkr fragments. They are torn at either the upper edge of the brooch or inside it, and the part outside the brooch has not been preserved. Thus, we have no conclusive evidence regarding how long the loops that once ran over the shoulders were.

Several graves at Birka have preserved the remains of an outer garment on top of the brooches and beneath the remains from the body. In these graves, however, there is no trace of the back of the smokkr, even though the layer beneath the body is preserved inside the brooches. Hägg (1974, p. 50) interprets this to mean that the back of the smokkr probably reached no higher than up to the shoulder blades of the person wearing it.



Många gånger finns det lämningar av ett yttre livplagg både ovanpå spännbucklornas skal och under förmultningsrester från kroppen - emellanåt med avigsidan (i den mån en sådan kan urskiljas) vänd uppåt = inåt. Delar av kjolens ryggparti anträffas aldrig rakt under spännbucklorna; detta tycks inte ha nått högre upp än till skulderbladen.

*Hägg 1974, p. 50*

I have cut the side pieces on my smokkr so that they angle slightly downwards at the top, placing the back of the smokkr at my shoulder blades. We have no evidence regarding the exact position of the straps, but setting them slantwise across the back is known from other clothing using shoulder straps, like e.g. the Russian sarafan (Bau 1981, p. 23, 38). Positioning the straps like this keeps them in place and less likely to slip off of the shoulders.

*Photograph: Hilde Thunem. Back view of smokkr.*

## The woven band

Only a small part (ca. 3 cm long) of the woven band sewn to the smokkr has been preserved in the grave. This makes it difficult to ascertain the original pattern of the band, and the technique used to create it.

*Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - woven band, stiched to diamond twill fragment.*

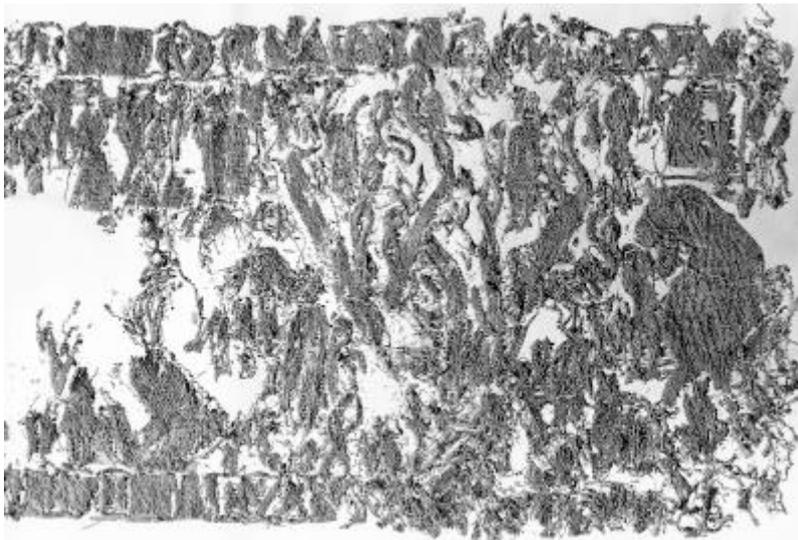
Blindheim (1945, p. 145-146) believes the woven band was created with two weft systems; a binding weft of linen (now disintegrated), and a pattern weft made of red wool. Both the underlying weaving technique and the use of two wefts are known from the Oseberg tapestries, and she suggests that the band was created using a simplified tapestry weaving technique (and thus is not tablet woven).



De partiene som ligger åpne nå, må opprinnelig ha hatt et annet islettsystem, som nå er forsvunnet, Det er rimeligst å tro at dette har vært av lin - lin forsvinner som kjent helt i jorden. Båndet har altså vært framstilt med to islettsystemer, og må vel da snarest kalles for en brosjert vevnad.

Mønstrer har tydeligvis vært rent geometrisk, men teknisk sett er det en vevnad av samme type som Osebergrevlene med to islettsystemer: et *bindeislett* som vel har vært av lin som nå er borte, men som ser ut til å ha gått gjennom hele båndet, og et *mønsterislett* av ull. Den av ull har vært kraftig rød, det kan en ennå se, men fargen på bindeisletten kan vi bare gjette på. Hvis vår formodning om at denne lille båndstumpen er laget i en slags forenklet billedvevsteknikk er riktig, er det etter det jeg kan se et ganske viktig bidrag til spørsmålet om billedvevens opphav her i Norden.

*Blindheim 1945, p. 145-146*



Blindheim notes that one of the Oseberg tapestries has two bands sewn along the top and bottom, and believes these bands to be woven by a similar technique to the band from T 16136 (Blindheim 1945, p. 146). It is worth mentioning that Hougen (published in Christensen, A.E og Nockert, M. [2006](#) p. 34) states that the bands are woven as a continuous part of the tapestry (not sewn on).

*Photo: [Universitetsmuseenes Fotoportal](#) Oseberg tapestry, [large version \(4,5 MB\)](#) *

The bands are decorated by a pattern made of geometric figures - W-figures and diamonds (Dedekam [1918](#), p. 57). The tapestry and bands are badly preserved, and thus cannot be

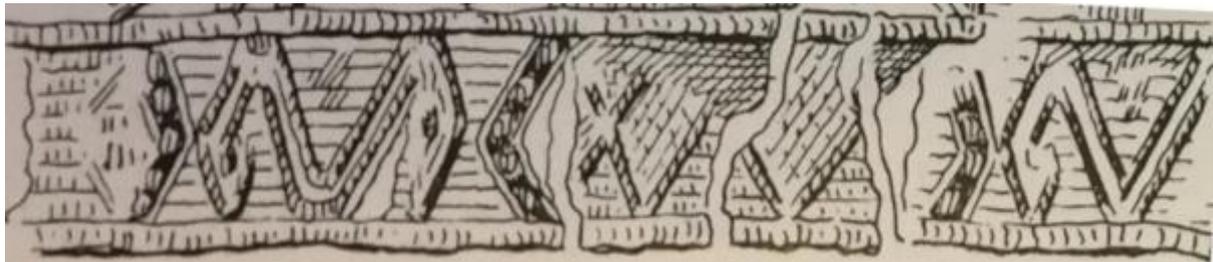
analysed closely. However, as almost 27 cm has been preserved, it gives a glimpse of how geometric figures may have been used for decoration.

<...> en av Oseberg-revlene - det stykke som har en framstilling av en offerhengning som motiv - har et bånd som avslutning langs øvre kant, som står vårt meget nær. Stykket er uhyre skjørt, og båndet er sydd fast til selve revlen, så noen nøyaktig analyse av det er det umulig å foreta. Det er bevart i betydelig større lengde, og mønsteret er sammensatt av w-figurer og noen geometriske figurer som selv for det blotte øye likner mønsteret på vårt bånd sterkt. Under lupen kan en se at teksturen er den samme.

*Blindheim 1945, p. 145-146*

Stykket [Osebergrevlen] er ca. 27 cm langt og 16 cm høit. Der gaar 10 rendingstraader paa 1 cm. Det avsluttes oventil og nedentil av en bord sammensatt av geometriske figurer (W-figurer og topstillede ruter). Borderne viser at stykket er bevaret i sin opprinnelige bredde.

*Dedekam 1918, p. 57.*



*Illustration: Dedekam 1918, p. 58, detail of band from drawing of the tapestry by Sofie Kraft.*

A more recent examination of the woven band from T 16136 by Raaness (2019) provides an alternative interpretation of the band. Raaness agrees with Blindheim that the band has been woven using a tapestry weaving technique, although as described above, she finds that the weaving pattern is slightly different than what is proposed by Blindheim. She further notes that the weaver appears to have used soumak with a thicker yarn along the edge of the areas that currently have no weft. She proposes that this may indicate that these areas have been left open intentionally, and thus that there was no second weft in use.

Det vevde båndet i T16136 er fremstilt i billedvevteknikk (over to, under en tråd) og soumak. Soumak av tykkere tråd rundt kanten av de åpne feltene kan indikere at de åpne feltene er laget med hensikt.

*Raaness 2019*

Band 12A2 from the Oseberg finds may have been woven using a similar technique. Here, the geometric figures (diamonds) repeat along the band, interspaced with "open" spaces where the warp is uncovered.



Photo: [Universitetsmuseenes Fotoportal](#) Oseberg woven band 12A2, [large version \(2 MB\)](#) 

## Other garments

It is difficult to tell what other garments, if any, that the woman would have been wearing in addition to the smokkr and underdress. The surviving textile fragments are small, and the circumstances of the excavation means that the stratigraphy is very uncertain except for the few fragments preserved inside the brooch.

Blindheim (1945, p. 157) notes that the diagonal twill is of a quality that could have been used in a garment but does not attempt to identify what kind. The size of the fragments (the largest is roughly 6,5 x 8 cm) and the lack of information about position and stratigraphy means that no definitive identification can be made. However, the evidence may still provide some clues.

There are no seams present, but there are a couple of details possibly giving information on the construction of the garment. The most interesting fragment in this regard is the one that has been folded and has a semi-circular opening encircling a small piece of non-textile material. It is difficult to ascertain whether the opening is intentional or is a result of something piercing the fabric in the grave. The non-textile material is ca 0,8 cm in diameter. This is a bit wide for an ordinary brooch pin, but it is difficult to tell how much of it is corrosion. Furthermore, the only brooch in the grave beside the oval brooches was the repurposed Irish mount. As it was not originally a brooch, it is possible that whatever pin was added to it was thicker than if it had been cast as part of the original jewellery.



Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - fragments of diagonal twill, [large version](#) (4.7 MB)

The other textile fragment that offers some information about construction of the garment is the "box pleat". There are no signs of stitches holding the pleat in place, and it is of course possible that the pleat is solely a result of the fabric being folded in the grave. However, it could also be the result of someone making intentional folds in the fabric (e.g. by piercing it with a pin) and the folds then being pressed flat in the grave.

Looking at the evidence, one possible interpretation of the diagonal twill could be a shawl, folded along the edges and pinned in place by a brooch. This is a garment that we know was worn by Norse women in the Viking age (Hägg [1971](#)), and which could explain both the "box

pleat" and the folded piece with a semicircular hole. Furthermore, a folded shawl would have had places where the fabric was lying in two layers, as is the case with the largest fragment of the diagonal twill. However, while a shawl is a *possible* explanation for the evidence, the interpretation is nowhere near certain.

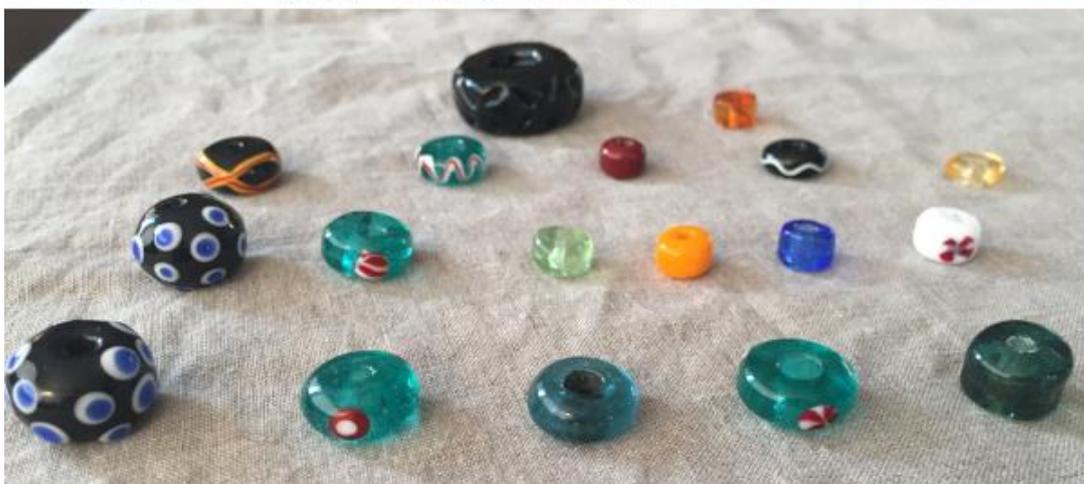
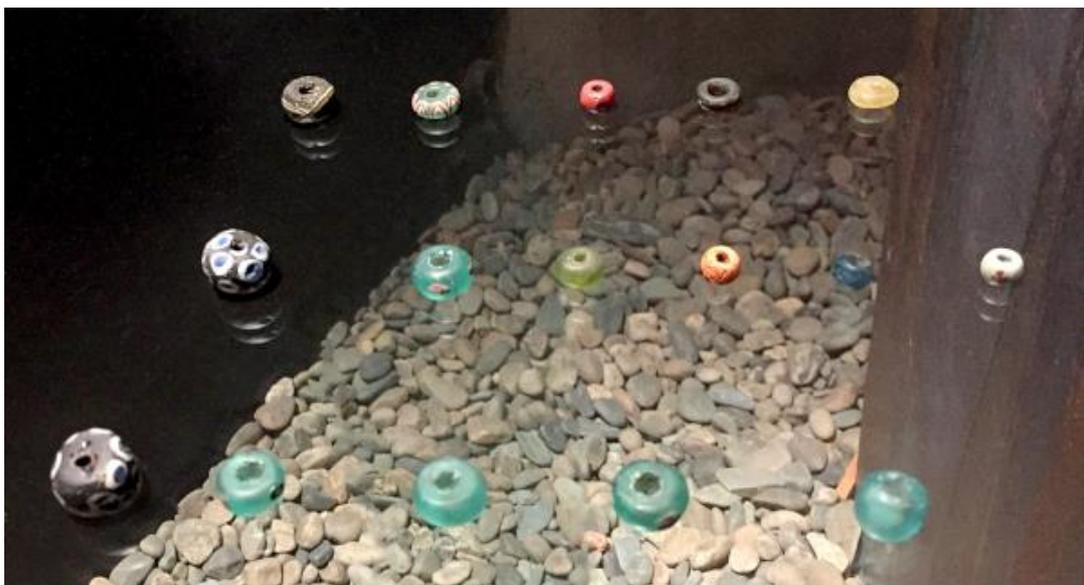
In addition to the diagonal twill, there were several fragments of coarsely woven fabrics in the grave, most notably a single fragment of a woollen fabric woven in a two two-colour check pattern. However, according to Blindheim (1945, p. 157), these are too coarse to come from clothing. It is possible they were part of one or more blankets lying beneath the body or covering it.

Hva de øvrige stoffene har vært brukt til, kan vi bare gjette på. Rimeligvis er det bare diagonalkyperten som kan ha vært anvendt til klær - de andre virker for grove til å ha vært klesstoffer.

*Blindheim 1945, p. 157*

## Reconstructing the beads

A reconstruction of the beads was made (by [Atelier Cobalt](#)) based on various photographs of the originals, showing their measurements and decoration.



*Photograph: Stiklestad National Culture Centre and Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - original beads (through display case) and reconstructions*

When it came to reconstructing the large black glass bead, there were several options. The original bead has deep recesses along the edge, and what may have been similar recesses on the sides (now worn away by time and use). It is possible that the recesses once held decorations that did not fuse with the black glass and have since disappeared. I chose a reconstruction that is close to the current state of the bead, with no recesses along the sides of the bead and no decorations in the recesses along the edge. I might try the alternative at a later date.



The size of the black bead raises another possibility, namely that it was not worn as a bead at all. Instead it may have been a spindle whorl. Spindle whorls are found in many sizes and materials, but a diameter of 3 - 4 cm is not unusual.

*Photograph: Agnes Raaness, Reconstructed bead used as spinning whorl*

17 perler av glass og 1 av rav. Herav er 1, av sort glass uten påsmeltet dekor, særlig stor, 4 cm bred, 2 cm høy. Den har rundt kanten en eiendommelig dekor fremkommen ved tverrgående rekker av tre elliptiske fordypninger i hver, et ornament som minner om ringkjeden. Perlen er åpenbart meget slitt og derfor antagelig gammel ved nedleggingen i graven. Således er begge hull ved slit av snoren trukket op mot kanten, så åpningen på begge sider er nesten pæreformet. Det skyldes sikkert også slit at derpå begge sider nu bare sees svake spor av fordypninger, som i likhet med dem rundt kanten også har vært anbragt her. Disse er ikke lenger parallelle, men slitt betydelig ned mot den del av kanten som efter slitet i hullenes åpning viser sig å ha vendt opp.

*NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet, finds register*

The description in the finds register indicate that the reason the bead sides are no longer parallel is due to wear, and that uneven wear in the hole of the bead indicate that the thinnest part of the bead was pointing upwards.

*Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - black bead edge view, [large version](#) (0.3 MB)*



This type of wear (especially one side of the hole being worn more than the other) does not fit well with the bead being a spindle whorl. However, I also find it unlikely that a woolen string would have caused such a significant degree of wear in a glass bead, even if it was worn often.

Without more information about the placement of the bead in the grave, it is difficult to tell what function it would have had. I have tried wearing bead combinations with and without it. Although it is significantly heavier than the other beads, it is possible to wear without much trouble. However, the question of whether it actually was worn cannot be answered conclusively given the information we have.

As the excavation report had no information about the position of each bead in the grave, it is unknown where they would have been worn. However, the presence of two probable bead strings, indicate that they would have been divided into two groups. I have chosen to arrange them accordingly.



Photograph: Hilde Thunem, T 16136 - possible bead arrangement that includes the large black bead.

## Who was the woman in grave T 16136?

The identity of the woman in grave T 16136 is lost to time, as is the case for almost all women and most men from the Viking Age. It is only the most powerful, the kings, queens or other persons in positions of power that tends to be mentioned in surviving documents of the time. However, although they cannot tell us who she was, the archaeological finds provide us with a glimpse of what status and position she would have held, and the connections she may have had.

### The oval brooches as signifiers of status

In a stratified Viking Age society, where a person's legal rights and social worth depended on what status they and their family could claim, dress and jewellery were important as signifiers of rank (Solberg [1985](#)). It is thus likely that the oval brooches the woman was wearing would have signalled her social group, position and cultural affiliation, in addition to fulfilling the practical function of holding up her dress.



The oval brooches and smokkr was not the only garment worn by Viking women. However, it is believed to have been a unique Scandinavian garment, not worn by other cultures. Thus, whenever oval brooches are found, they are interpreted as signifying the Scandinavianness of the wearer (Jesch [2015](#), p. 95-97).

Photograph: Stiklestad Nasjonale Kultursenter and Hilde Thunem, detail of brooch 1 from T 16136, [large version \(2.4 MB\)](#)

The archaeological evidence show that these brooches were both numerous and widely spread, with more than 1 500 found in Norway alone (Jansson [1985](#), p. 12). An analysis of 833 Merovingian and Viking Age female graves in Norway finds that more than 60% of the

graves contained oval brooches (Solberg 1985, p. 67-68, 71). Although graves with no brooches is likely to be underrepresented, as they are easier to overlook in the field, the amount of graves containing brooches is too large for these to have been a rare luxury item worn by the few.

Moreover, the oval brooches were usually made from copper alloy, although some were silver-plated or gilded to appear more valuable. The quality of the work varies, and many have flaws from poorly executed casting, or have been (badly) repaired, e.g. by having replacement parts riveted onto them (Lønborg 1999, p. 262-263). This indicates that they were not worn by the highest layers of society, but instead belonged to a social group that had to accept flaws in their jewellery, while aspiring upwards by using gilding to make the brooches resemble the gold items of the higher classes.

It is thus likely that oval brooches were worn by the prosperous farmers (Lønborg 1999, p. 267, Jesch 2015, p. 97). This conclusion is further supported by Jørgensen (2008, p. 125) who upon examination of the distribution of oval brooches in Trøndelag, Norway, finds that they largely follow the areas with good agricultural conditions.

Udfra undersøgelser af skålformede, ligearmede, trefligede, små og store runde fibler og andre støbte metallgjenstande, særlig af kobberlegeringer, fremgår det, at støbefejl, som giver sig til kende i form af manglende dele, var almindelige og accepterede, da sådanne gjenstande oftest utviser slid. Slidet ses dog kun på forsiderne, ikke på bagsiderne, hvorfor det ikke kan være fremkommet under brug, men snarere som følge af pudning. Disse gjenstande viser endvidere ofte reparationer, dele af eller hele nåleholderen/nåleskeden er knækket af og en ny i jern påsat med jern-nitter, der ofte er fæstnet på genstanden uden hensyntagen til fiblens opprindelige udseende. På gjenstande af kobberlegeringer ses ydermere ofte ændringer af udseendet i form af forgyldninger, blancheringer eller påloddede dele i sølv. Formålet med disse ændringer må have været at få disse gjenstande til at syne kostbare. Endvidere er gjenstandenes efterbearbejdning sjældent af førsteklasses udførelse.

Dette fører frem til, at ejere af disse genstande næppe tilhørte samfundets højeste lag, men tilhørte en stand, der accepterede fejl og mangler ved deres dragtudstyr samtidig med, at de "snobbete oppad". Det er derfor sandsynligt, at den dragt, som de skålformede fibler har siddet på, var båret af kvinder, der tilhørte den økonomisk bedrestillede del af bønderne.

*Lønborg 1999, p. 262-263*

Certainly, the craftsmanship and metals involved in making an oval brooch show that the wearer had sufficient wealth to acquire such jewellery, and they could therefore indicate her social rank or status. However, this rank is not of the highest. Oval brooches are most often made of copper alloy, gilded, and thus of a metal which resembles gold but is much cheaper to produce, suggesting an aspirant status.

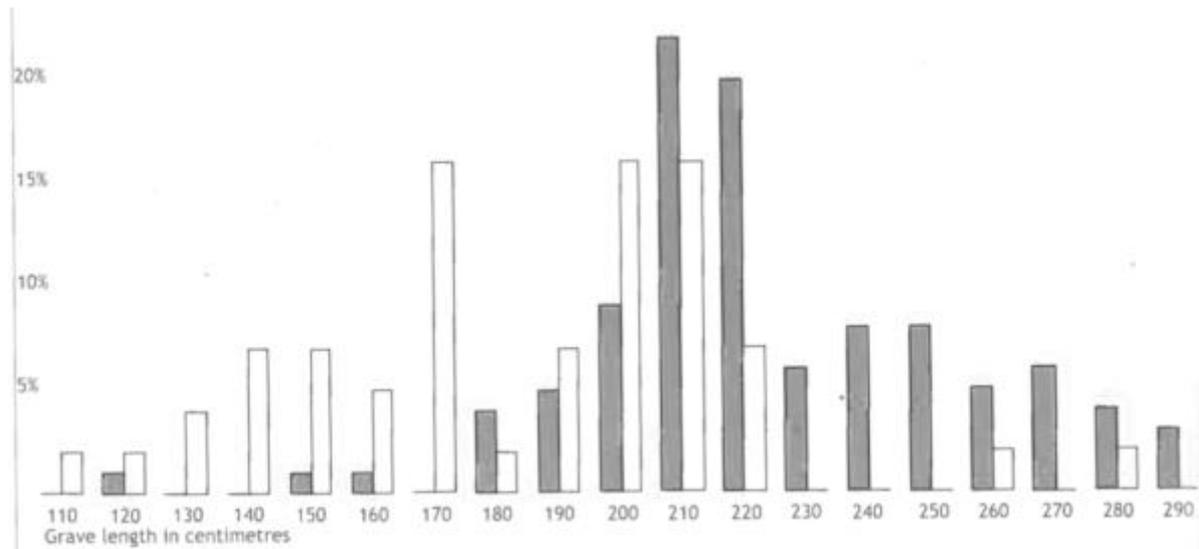
*Jesch 2015, p. 97*

Funnfordelingen for de ovale spennene ser i stor grad ut til å følge gode jordbruksområder, dette kombinert med en gjennomgang av et utvalg funnkontekster synes å støtte oppfatning om at kvinner innenfor bondestandens øvre sosiale lag har vært brukerne av de ovale spennene.

*Jørgensen 2008, p. 125*

In addition to indicating the social stratum of the woman and her family, the oval brooches may have been a signal of her position as an individual.

When comparing the grave lengths of women graves at Birka, Ewing (2006) finds that the shortest graves (180 cm or less) are almost always without oval brooches. Interpreting the shortest graves as containing children, and the slightly longer graves as (unmarried) young women, Ewing proposes that the brooches were the mark of a married woman (Ewing 2006, p. 39-40).



*Illustration: Graph comparing percentage figures for lengths of Birka graves with and without oval brooches. Shaded columns represent graves with oval brooches, white columns graves without (Ewing 2006, p. 39).*

The graves examined by Ewing are limited in numbers and from a specific context, namely the cemeteries of a prosperous trading port. A more representative picture is provided by Solberg's (1985, p. 67-68, 71) examination of 833 graves from different areas in Norway. Here the fraction of graves without oval brooches (34%) is too large to be explained as consisting of the underage and unmarried. Instead, they are interpreted as less prosperous, but still free, farmers.

However, within the social stratum that wore oval brooches, they may have been a sign of marriage. This would explain why they are usually not found in children's graves. Furthermore, in her analysis of Norwegian Viking graves, Solberg (2000) found that bronze keys usually appeared in graves with oval brooches. Keys had symbolic value in addition to their practical use. They were worn by the mistress of the house, representing her position of authority on the farm. Solberg thus proposes that among the prosperous farmers it would have been married women, or women in a position where they had the same legal position as men (e.g. a widow), that were wearing the oval brooches (Solberg 2000, p. 269).

This indicates that the woman in grave T 16136 belonged to the social stratum of free farmers, and was the mistress ("husfrue") of a prosperous farm. She was wearing a smokkr made of a finely woven fabric requiring great skill to produce. Her oval brooches were rare - only 65 of the 1500 oval brooches recorded in Norway were of the type P42 (Jansson 1985, p. 51). This type of brooches is often found together with other items that signals wealth, e.g. imported artefacts, indicating that the type may have been worn by especially prominent women (Petersen 1928, p. 51).

Utstyret i de to rikest utstyrte gruppene, der parspenner festet drakten sammen på skuldrene, svarer til beskrivelsen i Rigsthula. Trolig representerer disse kvinnene husfruer. Bronsenøkler opptre hovedsakelig i disse gravene. Det viser sannsynligvis tilbake på at kvinnen fikk overdratt nøklene til husets rom og kister idet hun overtok myndigheten som kone på gården. Dette har ikke bare vært en praktisk ordning, men også et viktig symbol på hennes husfrueposisjon.

Det er store tallmessige forskjeller mellom manns- og kvinnegraver, hele fem mannsgraver for hver kvinnegrav. Kanskje avspeiler det at det bare var kvinner som bestyrte gård og gods som ble æret med slike begravelser? En vet at i enkelte situasjoner overtok kona på gården mannens funksjoner (...). Når han var på reise eller i krig, var det hun som styrte gården. Som enke kunne hun få en særlig selvstendig status. Hvis barna var umyndige,

bestyrte hun gård og gods. I Gulatingsloven er det passasjer som omtaler "baugkvinner" som hadde rettslig status på linje med menn. Trolig har de fleste slike vært enker. Kvinnegravene reflekterer sannsynligvis slike "baugkvinner".

*Solberg 2000, p. 269*

Alt i alt synes det at fremgaa av fundkombinationene at de fund hvor R. 657 forekommer, meget ofte er særlig fremstaaende fund. Her er flere ganger fundet utenlandske sjeldnere saker. Det tyder paa at mere fremstaaende kvinder gjerne bar denslags spænder, og dette skulde igjen være en bekræftelse paa at R. 657 staar paa et høiere nivaa end dusinarbeider som R. 647, 652 og 654.

*Petersen 1928, p. 51*



*Photograph: Hilde Thunem. Reconstructed P42-brooches made by Blueaxe Reproductions. Copper alloy with silver buds. No silver wire, as the original brooches did not have holes for the wire to pass through.*

## The meaning of insular jewellery

Due to the non-professional excavation of the grave, there is no information about where on the body the Irish metal mount was found. However, a review by Heen-Pettersen (2013) of insular mounts found in Trøndelag indicates a varied use of this type of dress item. There is evidence of mounts being used as a third brooch on the upper part of the body (sometimes fastening a shawl or cloak), or as belt buckles or belt decorations. Both types of use are found in combination with oval brooches (Heen-Pettersen 2013, p.52-53, 2015, p. 8).

*Photograph: NTNU Vitenskapsmuseet and Agnes Raaness, T 16136 - Irish brooch*

Given that the description of the Irish mount in grave T 16136 mentions that there are traces of a pin catch left on the back of the mount, however, it is likely that this specific piece of jewellery served as a third brooch, perhaps fastening a shawl or other outerwear made from the diagonal twill found in the grave.



Gjennomgangen av insulære beslagsfunn fra Trøndelag tyder på at det har vært en variert bruk av denne gjenstandstypen på den norrøne kvinnedrakten, både som draktspenner på overkroppen til den gravlagte, men også som beltespenner/prydelsler. I den sammenheng er det verdt å påpeke at i samtlige tilfeller

hvor omarbeidede beslag har vært brukt som beltespenner, har den avdøde også vært utstyrt med to ovale skålspenner. Disse eksemplene viser at man bør være forsiktig med å betrakte kombinasjonen av omarbeidede beslag og ovale skålspenner som en indikasjon på at stykkene har vært i bruk som tredjespenner i de tilfeller hvor en slik funksjon ikke kan dokumenteres.

*Heen-Pettersen 2015, p. 8*

There are several theories regarding how such items could have come to Trøndelag. They could be result of raiding, like a reliquary shrine found in Melhus that is unlikely to have been acquired through peaceful interactions. Many of the Irish mounts are also believed to have come from saints' shrines or to holy books, which were carried off by the Vikings (Petersen [1940](#), p. 7).

These mountings may vary very much in shape, being round, square, cruciform, or of various special shapes. As a rule, they have gilt surfaces and often settings still, or once, filled with coloured glass, or stones, or amber  
*Petersen 1940, p. 7.*

However, insular mounts have also been found at trading venues such as Kaupang, Hedeby, Helgø and Birka, indicating that they may have been traded 'second hand'. Finally, workshop finds in Ireland indicate that ornamental metal mounts may have been produced for a larger market than the church, possibly allowing Vikings to acquire ecclesiastical looking objects peacefully (Heen-Pettersen 2015, p. 3, [2015b](#), p. 29-30).

Early graves with Insular finds are traditionally interpreted as indicating where the first Norse raiders set sail from across the North Sea. Such imported goods were probably acquired through a variety of interaction processes, and it can be difficult to separate different forms of exchange in the archaeological record. <...> The scale and composition of the early material seem to reflect both raiding and other forms of interaction with local populations, indicating complex contact between Trøndelag and the British Isles at an early stage.

*Heen-Pettersen 2015b, p. 29-30*

Tradisjonelt blir funn av insulære beslag ofte satt i sammenheng med plyndringstokter på De britiske øyer, hvor vikinger som deltok på tokt i etterkant ga metallstykkene som suvenirer til sine koner og mødre (...). I følge Bøe viser det store antall beslag fra norske gravfunn at "The custom of wearing souvenirs presented to them by the Vikings on the return from his westward expedition, has evidently been high fashion among the Norwegian women in the first half of the 9th century" (...). En rekke beslagstykker har imidlertid blitt funnet på handelssteder som Kaupang, Hedeby, Helgø og Birka. Det har derfor blitt foreslått at denne funngruppen også kan ha vært gjenstand for omsetning "second hand", ettersom deres utbredelse ofte er den samme som de alminnelige godtatte handelsvarene (...). I tillegg indikerer flere verkstedsfunn i Irland at produksjon av ornamenterte metallsaker kan ha vært beregnet på et større marked enn det kirken representerte (...). I den forbindelse har O' Croinin (1989) og Blindheim (1999) pekt på muligheten for at vikinger kan ha vært kunder på slike markeder, og derfor hatt mulighet til å skaffe seg kirkelige gjenstander på fredelig vis.

*Heen-Pettersen 2015 p. 3*

No matter how they arrived in Trøndelag, these metal mounts were not everyday items. Trøndelag is an area with rich farmland and excellent communications by water and land. Numerous burial mounds and cult sites suggest that it was an area of complex economic and social development in the Viking period, with well-established contacts to both west and east (Heen-Pettersen 2015b p. 27). Within this area, the insular items tend to be found in locations that are prosperous, central, and strategically placed in terms of trade (Heen-Pettersen 2013, p. 47). The largest concentration is in Stjørdal, an area that includes Værnes. The majority of the items are found in graves from the 800s, while after 900 the contact to the west appears to be more centralised and limited to the inmost parts of Trondheimsfjorden (Heen-Pettersen 2013, p. 84).

Det arkeologiske materialet fra Trøndelag indikerer at kontakten med insulært område har vært veletablert på et tidlig tidspunkt. Flere av de tidligste gravfunnene fra omkring 800 AD eller tidligere, synes å reflektere noe langt

mer enn enkeltstående raid. Med unntak av Melhusfunnet synes det insulære gjenstandsmaterialet fra disse gravene å ha blitt innført til Trøndelag gjennom andre forhold enn kun tilfeldige plyndringstokter.

Utover på 800-tallet øker funnmengden betraktelig, og hovedtyngden av det insulære gjenstandsmaterialet kan dateres til dette århundret. Denne økningen er spesielt tydelig i Trondheimsfjorden hvor Stjørdal peker seg ut med den klart tetteste funnkonsentrasjonen. Det samlede inntrykket av det insulære gjenstandsmaterialet indikerer at det i denne perioden har eksistert en nær og gjensidig relasjon mellom samfunn i Trondheimsfjorden og norrøne kolonier på De britiske øyer.

På 900-tallet indikerer det arkeologiske materialet at det skjer en rekke markante endringer i kontaktflaten vestover. Dette er spesielt tydelig i Utrøndelag, hvor den sterke forbindelsen mot De britiske øyer ser ut til å forsvinne omkring århundredskiftet. Den vestlige kontakten som fremdeles eksisterer etter ca 900 AD ser ut til å være sentralisert til den innerste delen av Trondheimsfjorden.

*Heen-Pettersen 2013, p. 84-85*

The rarity of the insular pieces and the fact that they are mainly found at locations that would have been centres of power, indicate that they were exclusive items, worn by the most prominent among the free farmers. The incorporation of these repurposed mounts into ordinary Norse dress would have served as a signal of status, possibly also showing off the wearer's contacts and trade with the British Isles. They would have been eye-catching and exotic, and their uniqueness means that each piece might have been strongly associated with a specific family or individual (Heen-Pettersen 2015, p. 9).

Omarbeidede beslag må ha fremstått som fremtredende og eksklusive former for draktprydelser, men også som fremmedartede med en klar assosiasjon til den insulære verden. Uavhengig om beslagene ble brukt som belteprydelser, tredjespener, amuletter eller andre former for draktsmykker, vil disse stykkene ha utgjort et iøynefallende element av klesdrakten eller plagget de var relatert til. <...>

Det faktum at beslagstykkene fremstår som utseendemessig svært ulike, åpner for at individuelle beslag kan ha blitt sterkt forbundet med den enkelte eier av gjenstanden og/eller familien som beslagene har tilhørt. Det er derfor grunn til å fremheve det potensialet som ligger i den store variasjonen i beslagenes utforming. Denne ulikheten forsterker inntrykket av gjenstandenes sterke meningsbærende betydning. Blant eliten i vikingtidens Trøndelag kan beslagene derfor ha fungert som viktige markører som har gitt signal om slektens status og overregionale kontakter når de ble båret på den kvinnelige klesdrakten.

*Heen-Pettersen 2015, p. 9*

The presence of the Irish metal mount in grave T 16136 thus indicates that this was a woman belonging to a family that had the ability to supply trading (or raiding) expeditions to the British Isles. Furthermore, she as an individual had the status to represent these insular ties, by wearing a unique piece of jewellery. It may be a sign that she was taking an active part in managing her family's trading with the British Isles.

Thus, we can conclude that while she was a free farmer, not a queen nor a Jarl's wife, she would have been a woman of status and importance to her local community. This is further supported by her burial in a boat grave, a form of grave that within her social group would have been reserved for the most prominent individuals.



... má af því marka at hún var mikit afbragð annarra kvenna.  
From this one can tell that she was greatly surpassing other women.

*Laxdølasaga*

Photograph: Stiklestad Nasjonale Kultursenter and Hilde Thunem, detail of brooch 1 from T 16136, [large version \(2.6 MB\)](#)

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