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OBITUARIES

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KOLBJØRN SKAARE (1931–2017)



Fig. 1. Medal of Kolbjørn Skaare by Øivind Hansen

Professor Dr. Philos. Kolbjørn Skaare quietly passed away at Smestad-hjemmet nursing home in Oslo on Saturday, 3rd June 2017. He was former Director of the University Coin Cabinet at the University of Oslo and President of the Commission internationale de numismatique (now INC). Skaare was employed as a scientific assistant at the University's Coin Cabinet, UiO in 1959, and later became a Curator, Lecturer (1983) and Professor in 1985. In 1976 he became Dr. Philos. with a dissertation on Viking Age coinage in Norway. He was the museum's director for most of his professional life until he retired in 2002.

Over the years, more than 500 publications came from his hand in a number of areas such as coinage in the Viking Age, medals, Greek and Roman numismatics, coin designs, banknotes and general topics on money and numismatics. Among his most important books are *Coins and*

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Coinage in Viking-Age Norway (1976), *Mynt i Norge* (Norwegian coinage, 1978), *Norskmynthistorie i 1000 år* (1000 Years of Norwegian Coinage, 2 volumes 1995) and *Mynten, myntene og medaljene. Den kgl. Myntshistorie 1806-2004* (The Mint, the Coins and the Medals. The History of the Royal Norwegian Mint 1806-2004, 2008).

Skaare was a pioneer in applying natural science methods in humanistic research, and already in the 1960s he started collaborating with the Institute of Nuclear Energy at Kjeller outside Oslo. The metallurgical examinations that he had carried out by neutron activation analysis form the basis for our knowledge about metallurgy of the coinages in Viking and medieval Norway. Several key articles published in *Nordic Numismatic Journal* (NNÅ) on the subject of identification and chronology of coin series issued by the kings Magnus Barefoot (1093-1103), Sverre Sigurdsson (1177-1202), Håkon Håkonsson (1217-63) and Archbishop Jon Raude significantly draw upon metallurgical evidence. Skaare's research on the coinage of Harald Hardrada suggested early on a connection between the increasing power of the King and coinage as an important national institution in the formative years of Norway as a nation. He concluded that this period witnessed the establishment of Norwegian national coinage. The large body of research based on extensive material studies makes it clear that Skaare must be called empiricist. He saw it as his main research assignment to facilitate access to the important coin material from Viking Age and medieval Norway for further research within archaeology, history and related disciplines. And here he has succeeded.

Skaare was also an avid mediator and lecturer on numismatics in Norway and the Nordic region, and he had his own weekly newspaper column on numismatics in the national press for a number of years. Public outreach was important to him, and he was happy to accept invitations from newspapers, radio and television making contributions to money-related subjects. Over the years he delivered hundreds of popular lectures on a broad range of numismatic themes for associations far and about.

Throughout his work, Skaare was responsible for taking care of the extensive collections at the Coin Cabinet in Oslo. He provided funds to carry out systematic acquisitions to complete key parts of the coin collection, and revised the particularly important finds from the Norwegian medieval churches. He catalogued most of the coin finds from Norway, and made significant contributions to the continuous task of updating and completing the national numismatic library. The digitization of the museum world also occurred on Skaare's watch, and the work on numismatic databases of the collections commenced already in 1990.

Kolbjørn Skaare was Vice-President and President of The Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters (1985-1989), Secretary (1979-1986) and President (1986-1991) of the Commission internationale de numismatique, member of a number of Norwegian and Nordic councils and com-

mittees. He has been awarded several awards at home and abroad, e.g. the King's Medal of Merit in gold in 1995. Skaare was a driving force in the Norwegian National Bank's Committee of coin design from 1967 to 2013, and through this work has literally put his mark on the country's coinage for decades.

Skaare made a great effort for many years as a Norwegian editor of the *Nordic Journal* from 1982 to 2002, and in the years 2004 to 2013 as head of the Norwegian department of the Letterstedtska Association, which, in addition to publishing the journal, supports all forms of Nordic cultural cooperation.

Skaare was one of the few who both managed both to establish and maintain an international research career and to safeguard personal interests throughout his professional life. Singing and music was an important part of Skaare's life. The Official Male Choir of the University of Oslo had Skaare as an active member for many years. Family, friends and colleagues at home and abroad remember Skaare's songs for different occasions, from confirmations to formal dinners at international conferences. Wildlife experiences were also important, and Skaare enjoyed peaceful times at his mountain cabin where the days were divided between family, trout fishing and writing articles.

There is a large group of colleagues across the Nordic region who feel grateful to have known such a sociable and kind person as Kolbjørn Skaare. His reputation as the country's Grand Old Man of numismatics will remain a tribute to his life for a long time.