

Review of: Gruszczynski, J. (2019). Viking silver, hoards and containers: The archaeological and historical context of Viking-Age silver coin deposits in the Baltic c. 800 - 1050. London: Routledge. Hardcover, 382 pages. ISBN 9781351243636

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When discussing the factors that drove Viking expansion into Eastern Europe, silver is usually at the front of the list. Much of this silver travelled out through the Baltic into other Viking diasporas, ending up traded for goods or placed in hoards. Therefore, Jacek Gruszczynski's re-examination of silver hoards in the Baltic and the reasoning behind their deposition and non-retrieval is crucial in understanding this important facet of Viking activity. The volume is broken up into six chapters which are further broken down into sub-sections which each address a distinct point. The second through fourth chapters are separated by geographic region: Gotland; Pomerania; and Svealand. They focus on the spatial distribution of hoards within each region and how this may impact the reasons for depositing hoards in those locations as well as discussing any relations of hoards to important geographical or cultural markers. The fifth chapter explores the composition and distribution of hoards from a chronological perspective, combing data from all three geographic areas.

The monograph is a reworking of Gruszczynski's doctoral thesis and, at times, reads like one, particularly when reading the detailed explanations of how the statistical analysis was conducted which expands into the appendices. However, this is very useful since one usually either gets a brief overview of methodology and details on the thought process of the author or the author jumps straight into the analysis and results. Gruszczynski's topic and the ways in which he collects the data benefit from the careful explanation and clarification, especially for those unaccustomed to dealing with statistical analysis. This emphasis on providing clear and thorough explanations and definitions can be seen from the introductory chapter where he outlines the key terms, such as the definition of a hoard, and contextual information for later discussions.

Chapters two through four each include a separate section which provides a brief summary of the historical context for that region. This involves using available written sources, both contemporary, such as the ninth-century Bavarian Geographer (pp. 86), and later sources, such as Guta Saga from the early thirteenth century (pp.

22). Gruszczynski justifies his use of later sources by noting the limitations and benefits to using them to describe past events.

Gruszczynski goes on to provide a description of his spatial analysis model. There is quite a lot of technical data and jargon here that is not easily understood but Gruszczynski explains the process and the resulting graphs clearly and succinctly. An expanded version of his methodology is found in the appendices for those wishing to follow his calculations in more detail.

Following the discussions of hoards in relation to settlement sites or major 'emporium', as classified by Gruszczynski, chapters two through four introduce the details of the spatial analysis for the geographic region in question and explains possible connections between hoard locations and composition with different types of places such as burials, markers in the landscape, areas for metalworking, harbours, et cetera. Unfortunately, all the case studies suffer from discrepancies in contextual archaeological data due to recording bias from all periods of excavation. That does not mean that the conclusions are not valuable or useful, especially in showing what should be recorded in the current archaeological methodology, but the limitations must be considered.

The use of place-names in the discussion to see if hoard deposition correlates with a certain type of place is of particular interest. In fact, despite problems with past archaeological recording methods Gruszczynski went to great lengths to utilize available onomastic evidence that could explain the reasoning behind hoard deposition. This is an effective way of bolstering the incomplete archaeological data to arrive at his conclusions.

Chapters two through four move on to discuss the impact of historical land use on the location of hoard deposition which includes soil typology and farming practices. The discussion of soil typology not often addressed in scholarship to date, particularly the correlation between changes in soil preference and hoard location. This is followed by presentation of regression analysis using the previously mentioned potential locations for deposition as variables. Finally, some preliminary conclusions on the logic behind the non-retrieval of hoards is given. It is here that possible religious significance of non-retrievable hoards is mentioned, albeit briefly.

The fifth chapter changes the angle of approach and focuses on events happening in each geographic region and the timeline of deposition. In this chapter the aforementioned historical context sections are combined in order to explain possible

reasons behind hoard deposition during certain periods, as well as any correlation this may have to hoard size or composition. This chapter was effective at combining archaeology with written sources and religious practices relating to hoard deposition. Gruszczynski makes very clear connections between the dates of events in each region's history and the time, size, composition, and reason for deposition of the hoards.

From the final conclusions, a particularly fascinating point for future interpretations of hoard evidence is the correlation of weights, retrievability of hoards, and methods of storage with the logic behind deposition. Gruszczynski concludes that the larger hoards in containers were meant to be retrieved at some point, and possibly even added to. The smaller deposits in containers were likely hidden during times of crisis. Small container-less hoards were likely not meant to be retrieved and therefore probably served a ritual purpose. The fact that each geographic area's categories are so similar suggests that there could have been a universally held logic behind hoarding along with the personal motivations for the choice of composition, location, and retrievability.

Gruszczynski provides a considerable variety of evidence with thorough explanations of his thought process, procedures and variables that impact his conclusions. He explores more than just why hoards were deposited in a certain location, but also what the hoard tells us about events/activities at that location over time. It is also very pleasing to see such strong interdisciplinary research. This monograph, while providing some answers regarding the reasons behind hoard deposition, is not necessarily meant to provide all the answers. Rather, Gruszczynski provides a solid foundation for future research which will, hopefully, allow time for the acquisition of more detailed data.

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