

*Silver Economies, Monetisation and Society in Scandinavia, AD 800-1100.* Edited by James Graham-Campbell, Søren M. Sindbaek and Gareth Williams. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2011, 380 pp., ISBN 978 87 7934 585 0.

This book is a collection of eighteen essays which were delivered as lectures to the symposium held in Denmark in 2008. The volume follows another which published the proceedings of an earlier conference held in 2000 (J. Graham-Campbell and G. Williams (eds.), *Silver Economy in the Viking Age*, 2007). In this volume the focus has been shifted from the Insular World to consider Scandinavia, although there are important contributions that discuss areas beyond this, specifically the Slavic lands and the Carolingian Kingdom. As would be expected in a collection of this sort, the material, regions and chronologies vary markedly as does the scale of analysis. Some authors consider a single material, rings or coins for example, others adopted a site- or hoard-based approach, anchoring discussion in one place, while a few discuss silver economies within broader analyses of exchange in the early medieval economy. This variation between micro and macro approaches gives the volume both breadth and depth. The book is written in the context of the recent publication of *Means of Exchange* (D. Skre (ed.), *Means of Exchange: Dealing with silver in the Viking Age*, 2008), which has reshaped discussion of silver in the Viking Age. I would argue that *Means of Exchange* represents a revolutionary work, reshaping theoretical and methodological dialogues, but with a narrow focus upon the Kaupang silver assemblage. This book might be described as evolutionary but with a much

broader focus. The contributors take many of the new ideas that are current in the study of Viking Age silver, combine them with an incredibly broad array of, often new, evidence and produce a very diverse volume which advances discussion in a number of areas.

One of the most significant developments within the study of Viking-Age silver, reflected in the title of the volume, is a move away from discussion of a single 'silver economy' towards a greater awareness of 'silver economies'. Realisation of the variety of practice that occurred in the Viking Age is present within a number of the papers in the volume. Paralleling this has been the rejection of the idea that there was a simple, linear move from 'display' to coin-using economies with bullion acting as a middle point in this process. This is quite visible in James Graham-Campbell's essay which examines the silver economies of the ninth century. At the heart of his discussion is the Hoen hoard which is often conceived of as a classical example of the 'display economy'. Graham-Campbell thoughtfully argues that it is possible to trace evidence for the emerging bullion economy amongst the display ornaments, dissolving clear dichotomies between pre-existing silver economies and the changing patterns of silver usage that were visible in the ninth century. Similarly, Christoph Kilger considers the relationship between bullion and coin-using economies, focusing upon the 'Anglo-Scandinavian' imitative coinage. The coinage was struck at a number of centres across Scandinavia in the eleventh century and is difficult to interpret given an apparent contrast to the 'regal' coinages which emerged slightly later. Kilger argues that the Anglo-Scandinavian coinage had only a very brief period in which they were 'over-valued' be-

yond their intrinsic silver value, only when they were circulating in urban environments. This perspective can be contrasted to that adopted by Kenneth Jonsson in his contribution. His focus is upon the dirham hoards within Sweden, particularly the ebb and flow of dirham imports into the area. Jonsson makes the point, in line with other papers, that the silver economy was complex from an early date. However, I feel that he may overstate the evidence somewhat when he goes on to posit the possibility that some dirhams may have been valued by tale rather than by weight. The absence of political authority guaranteeing 'over-value' and the frequently fragmentary nature of dirhams would suggest that valuation by tale was unlikely during the Viking Age. I feel it is more likely that the Anglo-Scandinavian coinage of the eleventh century was valued by its weight than the dirhams of the tenth were valued by tale. However, the fact that two authors can take such differing views highlights the tendency to blur the lines between the various silver economies of the Viking Age.

The breakdown of traditional distinctions between display and monetary economies is something that is visible in a number of other papers. Anne Pedersen considers finds of jewellery from southern Scandinavia, primarily drawing upon Danish material. Her focus highlights the extent of weight-adjustment amongst whole objects, suggesting even those materials that we may conceptualise of as display-orientated had a link into economic mindsets. Another element that emerges from Pedersen's work was the number of gold rings (23) in relation to silver (147). The point is all too frequently made about the scarcity of gold in Viking-Age finds. However, Pedersen's work suggests that it was, in fact, not all that unusual. A ratio of

roughly 1:7 in finds would be less than the typical ratio of 1:8 or 1:10 which would be expected from reading early medieval written sources. Indeed, the relationship between different types of metal is something which is alluded to at a number of points in this volume. It is also visible in Majvor Östergren's paper which focuses upon the context of the spectacular Spillings hoards. The two silver hoards both weighed in at over 25 kg each and their scale cannot be emphasized enough, with the amount of silver sufficient to pay the annual tax of Gotland five times over. There was also a large bronze hoard of similar size which included a significant proportion of imported Baltic metalwork. All three hoards were determined to have been hidden beneath the floor of a single building. Östergren's article is only an initial discussion of the hoard but it raises important questions. Amongst these are the differing interpretations of the silver and copper. The silver is viewed in an 'economic' manner whilst the copper is argued to represent the raw material for bronze-casting. Whilst metal-working is one explanation for it, the fact that there was so much, that it was concealed and that there was 'a sturdy, advanced, locking device' on the wooden box in which it was contained certainly hints towards a more 'economic' explanation for the bronze hoard. The rationale behind hoarding and thus the interpretation of the objects within hoards is something that Egon Wamers discusses in relation to the non-numismatic hoard from Duesminde. This included several 'sets' of Carolingian elite military dress accessories. Wamers argues that much of the hoard can be dated stylistically, with early-ninth century material hoarded alongside objects from the tenth. This is used to suggest that some of the objects may have had a long

life-span in Scandinavia, countering the perception that the hoard is to be related to raiding activity in the ninth century. It is supported by the fact that much of the metalwork has been adapted, generally turned into brooches, suggesting a second life for it in Scandinavia. Each of these papers suggests that any concept of a simple and passive 'display economy' is patently false, instead implying a high degree of interaction with 'economic' spheres.

To a certain extent the breakdown of traditional distinction between display, bullion and monetary economies is as a consequence of new and/or more precision with regard to dating. This is visible within the current volume with several authors offering new dating and phasing of material. This is evident in Simon Coupland's article which brings new evidence and insight to the fore in considering the relationship between Scandinavians and silver in the Carolingian world of the ninth century. He divides the period into three with a first period which, counter-intuitively, saw the greatest concentration of Carolingian single coin-finds in Scandinavia. This is argued, drawing upon the mint origins of the coins, to be largely the product of raiding, and to a lesser extent trade, rather than as a result of missionary activity or political gifting as has been argued elsewhere. Coupland's second phase, centred upon the middle of the ninth century, saw a decline in single-finds in Scandinavia and the emergence of some 'viking' hoards in the west. This is associated with a greater permanence to the raiding in the west while the decline in Scandinavian finds is seen to reflect their becoming more common, and thus worthy of conversion into ingot or arm-ring, in contrast to the early part of the century when they had a certain cache to them. The final phase saw virtually no

finds in Scandinavia but far more coins in British and Irish hoards. This is used to highlight the changing networks of the viking, particularly the inter-connected activities of the 'great army'. There is much to recommend Coupland's argument and it compellingly ties together quite disparate strands of evidence to form a cogent and convincing argument. Crucially, he seeks to dissolve monolithic views of the period, utilising the shifting media of ninth-century silver to provide a useful interpretative model. Jens Christian Moesgaard also focuses upon chronology, particularly that of the testing of silver. His arguments are based upon the Duesminde coin hoard. Moesgaard considers the western European coins within the mid-tenth century hoard, noting that a significant minority have been pecked. This can be contrasted to the Islamic coins within the hoard which are unpecked. Moesgaard makes the convincing case that it is the western coins which would have been unusual to Scandinavian eyes in the mid-tenth century and thus were those tested. The chronology of this is quite different to that traditionally espoused, drawing back the beginning of pecking in Scandinavia much closer to the end of the practice in England in the early tenth century. Rather than seeing the testing of silver as two chronologically-disjointed phenomena, *c.*900 in the Insular World and *c.*1000 in Scandinavia, increasingly this gap is being closed.

Similarly, the chronological variability of Viking-Age silver economies emerges from a number of regional overviews. These divide the period into phases based upon hoard size, silver type, fragmentation and distribution. This is apparent in Mateusz Bogucki's discussion of the Slavic lands where the chronology of monetisation is divided into seven phases. His argument

suggests that relatively small amounts of silver initially entered the region, largely within the preserve of the elite and merchants, and that this was connected to trade through the Baltic. The gradual dispersal of silver throughout society and reorganisation of trade is then traced over the following centuries, with the importance of royal power in change emphasized. There are some similarities, but also a fundamental difference of interpretation, in Cecilia von Heijne's discussion of the patterns of monetisation in southern Scandinavia. She utilises the extensive publication of hoards to argue, in broad strokes, that the ninth century saw relatively concentrated use of coinage at a few sites, described as 'central-places', with a decentralisation of silver to a much wider array of sites in the tenth century. The process was reversed in the eleventh century when minting concentrates coinage within royal hands once more. The argument is generally persuasive although it would be interesting to consider the extent to which the 'centralised' use of often foreign silver in the ninth century can be described as similar to 'centralised' production, but relatively widespread usage, of coinage in the eleventh. The similarity of phenomena between the southern Scandinavia and the Slavic areas is quite striking and juxtaposing the two highlights the value of a volume of this sort.

A number of papers consider the relationship between urban assemblages, usually archaeologically collected, and rural hoards, more regularly 'chance' finds. Volker Hilberg summarises the numismatic material from Hedeby. This has grown significantly with a further 207 coins found since the last publication of finds from the site. This includes material from a single *grubenhäus* which burnt down, giving a good idea of what materials were

inside. Amongst this assemblage were five late-tenth century coins of diverse origins highlighting the fact that the town was rich with a well-mixed pool of currency. When compared to rural areas the intensity of urban usage of silver is notable, a point which Julie Askjem's paper makes clearly. She summarises the hoard evidence from eastern Norway, using it to consider the exceptionality of Kaupang. The town with its highly fragmented silver stands in contrast to most of Eastern Norway where there are different types of, and less fragmented, silver within hoards. Similar conclusions are arrived at by Birgitta Hårdh. She focuses upon evidence from Uppakra, considering its hinterland and similarities to other contemporary urban areas. Again, she highlights the difference between urban and rural assemblages. It is argued to be attributable to chronology with towns utilising coinage far sooner, in the late-ninth century, than rural areas where hack-silver was only widely used in the tenth. This is a point which accords with the findings from Kaupang. It is also reflected in Ingrid Gustin's summary of the coinage found at Birka. She provides brief listings of the number and age profile of the coins from the town. Again, her analysis emphasizes the dissimilarity between towns and rural areas with her conclusions that there are quite different currency pools between the two; towns having a far higher proportion of older dirhams. Each of these papers highlights the fact that the difference between urban and rural assemblages is quite clear in the ninth century. However, they raise the intriguing question of why there was a drop in coin finds from towns in the mid- to late-tenth, almost exactly a high point for coin hoards in rural areas. This is one of several questions which suggest that there is still much scope for work in

this area. Most pressingly, if metal-detection occurred widely, as has been the case with the excavation of most towns, would the patterns begin to harmonise somewhat? Similarly, as Askjem notes, there are differences within the Norwegian rural hoards and it would be interesting to determine to what extent hoards from the vicinity of towns vary from those in other rural areas.

A majority of the papers consider the 'silver economies' and 'monetisation' of the title but several offer broader interpretations. Sindbæk, in particular, focuses upon the 'society' aspect of the title of the volume. He seeks to question why the exchange of silver was socially meaningful. It is easy to forget that silver was not inherently valuable and he seeks to probe how and why it was imbued with value in the Viking Age. Sindbæk makes the point that silver represents 'virtual social glue' invested with the ability to transport social relations over distance, to remain unchanged over a period of time and also to be divided as and when needed. The point at the heart of this, that silver represented a means of exchange with certain advantages over others, making it a valuable commodity, is a point which contrasts quite neatly with the paper by Dagfinn Skre. He considers the importance of silver in the Viking Age by placing it within a broader discussion of commodity money. Central to his argument is the point that silver represents only the most archaeologically-visible means of exchange but that this does not equate with a dominance of exchange by silver in the Viking Age. The importance of commodity money is something that is also stressed by Gullbekk, who in providing a summary of Norwegian silver usage, emphasizes the fact that a variety of materials could potentially have had monetary properties, eve-

rything from swords to butter. He notes the difficulties of integrating these materials, largely archaeologically invisible and only historical recorded in the medieval period, into an analysis of the Viking Age. Gullbekk raises a particularly interesting point about commodity monies, focusing in upon the fact that they rely upon the concept of assessment – how much of a particular commodity – which can be contrasted to more of a monetary system - where the question was how many. He does not try to argue that one system replaced the other but highlights the fact that they existed alongside one another in the medieval period and were likely to have done so in the Viking Age as well. These three papers represent the most thought-provoking in the volume and I would strongly encourage those interested in Viking Age silver to read them. Whilst not necessarily presenting entirely new evidence they are challenging from a theoretical perspective, forcing those working on Viking-Age silver to question its significance. Should we view and analyse silver as a fundamentally distinctive means of exchange or as one element within a commodity money system? These papers provide some thoughts on this issue and hint towards interesting new directions within the study of Viking-Age silver.

Gareth Williams provides a paper which draws together the various strands and offers some thoughts that transcend the chronologies and geographies discussed. This is most clearly demonstrated in the phasing that he suggests for the use of silver in Scandinavia as a whole. He breaks the Viking Age into seven periods, providing a brief description of silver form and usage. This helps to orientate the discussion and is invaluable as it allows those new to the subject or confined within a narrow

dialogue to understand the broader picture. In some ways, the absence of this type of perspective from other papers is the only substantial criticism of the volume. Perhaps this is understandable in a volume of this sort but the big picture is occasionally lost in an overwhelming level of detail. It would also have been really interesting to have had a little more dialogue across the papers with differences of interpretation – Kilger and Jonsson being an obvious example – explored within the papers. However, criticism of the volume should not be too harsh. In terms of its production, it is excellent with images, particularly of the Duesminde hoard, which are of the highest standard. In terms of the content, it has important empirical contributions with the numismatic and other silver from a number of towns and hoards described in more detail than ever before. The regional summaries provide important overviews which, in certain cases, make inaccessible material available to an English-language audience for the first time. Lastly, the theoretical and methodological discussions within some of the papers are novel and suggest future directions within the field. In short, *Silver Economies, Monetisation and Society* provides the most recent and comprehensive discussion of Viking-Age silver. It will inevitably, and quite rightly, find a home on student reading lists and the bookshelves of any serious scholar of the Viking Age and its silver.

A. R. Woods

Elżbieta Baran, *Katalog monet polskich w zbiorach Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich. Tom 2. Monety jagiellońskie 1434–1501*. Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich. Wrocław 2013, 223 s., 53 tabl. (nlb.), ISBN 978-83-61056-42-3.

Piętnaście lat czekaliśmy na kolejny tom w serii katalogów monet polskich w zbiorach Ossolineum. W ciągu tak długiego czasu ogromnie wzrosła zarówno wiedza o monetach średniowiecznych w Polsce, jak i liczba monet w zbiorach, a postęp badań numizmatycznych zwiększył jeszcze potrzebę zapoznania się z nimi, co wydanie dobrego katalogu znacznie ułatwia.

Zakres chronologiczny i rzeczowy pracy został precyzyjnie określony w tytule. W zamyśle Autorki niniejsza prezentacja zbioru monet jagiellońskich jest dopełnieniem tomu pierwszego i kończy opis monet okresu średniowiecza w zbiorach Zakładu Narodowego im. Ossolińskich. I już na wstępie należy zwrócić uwagę na granice chronologiczne średniowiecza w numizmatyce polskiej. W literaturze przedmiotu najczęściej możemy spotkać się z poglądem, że produkcja monet średniowiecznych w Polsce urywa się w 1501 roku a następne emisje Aleksandra i Zygmunta I są powszechnie zaliczane do epoki renesansu. Mało kiedy bierze się pod uwagę fakt zerwania w Polsce ze średniowieczną strukturą pieniądza opartą na półgroszu i denarze dopiero przez reformy przeprowadzone w latach 1526–1528, które wprowadziły złożony system z własną monetą złotą. Szkoda, że i Autorka wybrała tę drogę, gdyż opis półgroszków Aleksandra i Zygmunta I w zbiorach Ossolineum zapewne objętości pracy w znaczący sposób by nie zwiększył, a temat monet